

STARS AND STRIPES®

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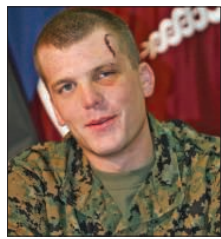
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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2004

Powell, three others resign from Cabinet

Secretary of State to stay until successor named Page 11



Wounded recount Fallujah battle, vow to return to Iraq

Troops describe well-prepared rebels, weapon stockpiles

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ABOVE: MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes TOP LEFT: AP

Above: From left, Army Spc. Kris Clinkscales and Marine Lance Cpls. Travis Schafer, Ryan Chapman and Jeffery Owens, all wounded during fighting in Fallujah, Iraq, talk to the media Monday at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany. Top left: Chapman, from Lawrence, Kan., talks to the media during the news conference. "Everyone keeps telling me I'm lucky. I'll go with that. It's nothing too serious. [The bullet] cracked my skull, but it looks worse than it really is," Chapman said.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Blake murder trial: Defense attorneys for Robert Blake are looking for jurors who may be open to conspiracy theories.

Prosecutors, on the other hand, want people who use common sense and make quick decisions.

More than three years after Blake's wife was shot to death outside a San Fernando Valley restaurant, the selection process for more than 100 potential jurors was to begin Monday in the actor's murder trial.

Blake, former star of the "Baretta" TV series and the movie "In Cold Blood," is charged with murder in the death of his wife, Bonny Lee Bakley, whom he married after DNA tests showed he was the father of her baby.

New N.J. governor sworn in: Gov. James E. McGreevey submitted his letter of resignation on Monday, ending a tenure doomed by a shocking summertime disclosure he had engaged in a gay, extramarital affair.

The letter, signed by McGreevey, was filed with Secretary of State Regina Thomas. It says, "Dear Madam Secretary, I resign effective 11:59 p.m. on Monday, November 15, 2004."

On Sunday, state Senate President Richard Codey took the oath of office as acting governor in a private ceremony at his home. He takes over once McGreevey has officially left the job at midnight.

New bishop elected: A bishop whose diocese plans to seek bankruptcy protection from millions of dollars in clergy sex abuse claims was elected in Washington on Monday as the next president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Bishop William Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., was elected overwhelmingly to succeed Bishop Wilton Gregory of Belleville, Ill., who is ending his three-year term after leading the conference through the height of the clergy sex abuse crisis.

Advocates for abuse victims had opposed the Skylstad's candidacy, saying he was trying to avoid responsibility for mishandling priests who molested young people. Some church observers had also wondered whether the bishops would want their top leader to come from a diocese embroiled in abuse-related financial problems.

McAin backs CIA shake-up: Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., on Sunday supported CIA Director Porter Goss's shake-up of the intelligence agency, which he described as "dysfunctional" and not providing President Bush with the information needed to conduct the war on terrorism.

Reacting to stories about potential resignations of CIA officials in response to actions taken by Goss and his staff, McCain, appearing on ABC's "This Week With George Stephanopoulos," said, "A shake-up is absolutely necessary."

McCain said that although the agency has "good and decent people" it had become dysfunctional and that "a shake-up is absolutely necessary."

Human smuggling plea: A woman pleaded guilty Monday to her role in a human smuggling operation in which 19 illegal immigrants died after boarding a sweltering transport.

Norma Gonzalez Sanchez was set to go to trial on Nov. 29 with three other defendants who prosecutors say were involved in the smuggling operation, the nation's deadliest. She pleaded guilty to a charge of harboring and transporting illegal immigrants into the United States and causing serious injury or death to a person as a result.



Turkey marks anniversary of attacks: Nermi Sahin, center, whose son was killed following a suicide attack last year at an Istanbul synagogue, lays flowers Monday at the scene of the blast in Istanbul. Turkish Jews and Muslims cried in the rain and recited prayers of mourning as they marked the first anniversary of suicide bombings that struck two Istanbul synagogues in attacks blamed on a local al-Qaida cell.

World

Iraq elections: Along with their monthly ration of sugar, rice and flour, Iraqis are receiving a piece of paper promoted as a key to a democratic Iraq: a voter registration sheet.

Iraqis will choose a national assembly, which among other things will draft a permanent constitution. If the document is ratified in a referendum, another election will be held in December 2005.

Voter registration began Nov. 1 and runs through Dec. 15, with authorities using a Saddam Hussein-era database for food rationing to create the initial voter list. When Iraqis receive their monthly ration, they get a sheet of paper listing members of each family.

Dollar value drops in Cuba: The value of a dollar in Cuba dropped to 90 cents on Monday as a surcharge on the American greenback took effect, the latest step in the island nation's conversion from an economy based on U.S. currency to one using the new convertible peso.

Cubans and tourists lined up to change dollars into pesos over the weekend. As of last week, U.S. currency no longer was accepted at Cuban stores, restaurants, hotels or other businesses, and the new 10 percent surcharge is meant to further discourage people from bringing currency from Cuba's No. 1 enemy to the island.

President Fidel Castro has said the widespread use of the American money was being halted to guarantee Cuba's economic independence.

Afghan militants set new deadline: Taliban-linked militants threatening to kill three U.N. hostages gave the government until Monday night to reach a deal for their release, while Afghan officials said negotiations had been postponed amid disagreements over ransom demands.

Philippine diplomat Angelito Nayan, British-Irish Antarctic Flanigan, and Shipke Hebl of Kosovo were seized at gunpoint on

Oct. 28 — the first abduction of foreigners in the capital since the fall of the Taliban three years ago.

The purported leader of Jaish-ul-Muslimeen, which is seeking the release of 26 militants in exchange for the trio, told The Associated Press that the new deadline for an agreement was 10 p.m. Monday.

War crimes trial: U.N. prosecutors promised witnesses would help prove war crimes charges against three former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army whose trial began Monday — the first ethnic Albanians to face charges stemming from the Kosovo war at the Hague tribunal.

Prosecutors accused Fatmir Limaj, Haradin Bala and Isak Musliu of murder, torture and imprisonment of Serb civilians, as well as "perceived Albanian collaborators" during the 1998-1999 conflict.

All have pleaded innocent. Their arrest in February set off protests in Kosovo's capital Pristina, where many ethnic Albanians view them as heroes in a war for independence. But although Kosovo's public television RTK broadcast the proceedings live Monday, with simultaneous translation in Albanian, there was little public reaction in Kosovo to the start of the trial.

However, the trial may help stem Serb criticism of the United Nations court. Many Serbs have accused the court of being prejudiced against them, saying few Muslims have been indicted for alleged crimes in the wars during the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Japan, N. Korea talks: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Monday he was not satisfied with the outcome of North Korea's investigation into the fate of several Japanese nationals abducted decades ago by the communist country's spies.

He said Tokyo has not ruled out the possibility of economic sanctions.

North Korea has admitted to kidnapping 13 Japanese in the 1970s and 1980s to train them in Japanese language and culture. The regime released five in 2002 but has said the eight others died — a claim many Japanese don't believe.

Japanese officials returned Monday on a chartered flight from North Korea with what Pyongyang says are the remains of a woman kidnapped 26 years ago, according to media reports. They also carried the documents and possessions of seven other Japanese citizens.

Basque plan rejected: Spain's justice minister rejected a new proposal on Monday for Basque militants to form a new region's long-running conflict, saying they must first explicitly renounce violence.

At a rally Sunday in San Sebastian, former members of the banned party Batasuna — seen as the political wing of the armed group ETA — unveiled a 7-point plan for a new peace process before a crowd of 15,000 people chanting slogans in support of ETA.

The blueprint contained two key policy shifts: dialogue among all parties in the region, including those which oppose the idea of Basque independence, as a step toward some kind of referendum on the region's future. Until now Batasuna had limited such dialogue to Basque nonnationalist parties.

Batasuna also says now that it could negotiate an end to the conflict as part of that final-status dialogue, dropping its previous insistence that ETA itself be the main player. Under the plan, ETA and the Spanish government would only negotiate side issues like what to do with the estimated 500 ETA prisoners in Spanish jails.

Stories and photo from wire services

U.S. deaths in Iraq

Marine colonel calls Fallujah 'basically secure,' but still dangerous

By TINI TRAN
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Pierce battles between insurgents and U.S. and Iraqi forces killed at least 27 people on Monday in Baquba and south of Baghdad — the latest in a wave of clashes that has swept Iraq's Sunni Muslim heartland even as American forces move against the last remaining pockets of resistance in Fallujah.

U.S. forces have now secured "100 percent of Fallujah," according to Col. Michael Regner, operations director of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

The city is basically secure, and we can go wherever we want," Regner told Pentagon reporters Monday afternoon from Camp Fallujah, a marine Remate base just outside the city.

However, securing the city, however, is not the same as fully controlling it, Regner added.

Moreover, "some portions of the city are more clear than others," Regner said.

Earlier Monday, a convoy of ambulances and relief supplies trying to enter Fallujah was forced to turn back because the fighting made it too dangerous, the head of the Iraqi Red Crescent said. The Red Crescent and Red Cross have been unable to gain access to people inside Fallujah during more than a week of violence.

Marines have detained 1,052 alleged fighters, Regner said, of whom only a handful — no more than 20 — appear to be foreign fighters.

Meanwhile, Marines are now involved with the city of Ramadi, the provisional seat of Al Anbar province, Regner said.

"For a week now, [Ramadi] has been tougher," Regner said, prompting the Marines to send in two full battalions of fighters to quell fighting in the past 48 hours.

Marines have found "a number of weapons caches, and a number of terrorists have been killed or



U.S. Marines of the 1st division enter a house to take up position in the western part of Fallujah, Iraq, Monday. U.S. ground forces were trying to corner the remaining resistance in the city.

captured" in Ramadi, Regner said. "But it is not a cleared city."

Regner said that some of the anti-coalition fighters in Ramadi and other Iraq cities could be fighters who escaped from Fallujah at some point during the battle, which is now in its eighth day.

According to Regner, "we have had 37 Marines and soldiers killed in action" in the fighting in Fallujah, while there was one "noncombat death" in the city over the weekend, which he did not define.

There have been 320 U.S. forces wounded in action, Regner said, with 134 of those "returned to duty" after receiving medical attention.

Heavy explosions rocked Baghdad's Green Zone after midnight

Monday, triggering two huge plumes of smoke.

There was no immediate explanation for the blasts, which hit at 8:30 p.m. The highly fortified Green Zone, the home of the U.S. and Iraqi leadership, lies on the western bank of the Tigris River.

Loudspeakers boomed across the river, warning "Take cover, take cover."

Even as the fighting continued in the city, Iraq's interior minister declared victory in the offensive. "Fallujah is no more a safe haven for the terrorists and killers. This thing is over," Falah Hassan al-Naqib told reporters in Baghdad.

Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said the leader of a militant group behind the killing of some foreign hostages had been captured.

Moayad Ahmed Yasseen, leader of the group Muhammad's Army, was captured along with an unspecified number of his followers, Allawi said.

Allawi's office confirmed that two of his female relatives who were kidnapped last week have been released. Allawi's cousin, Ghazi Allawi, 75, his cousin's wife and his cousin's pregnant daughter-in-law were abducted at gunpoint last Tuesday in western Baghdad's Yarmouk neighborhood. There was no word on the count.

On Sunday, U.S. Marines found the disemboweled body of a Western woman wrapped in a blood-soaked blanket on a street in Fallujah.

The woman could not be immediately identified, but the only Western women known to have been taken hostage are Briton Margaret Hassan, 39, director of CARE international in Iraq, and Teresa Borcz Khalifa, 54, a Polish-born longtime resident of Iraq.

Outside Fallujah, U.S. and Iraqi troops and insurgents clashed in several cities across a belt of central and northern Iraq, including Baquba, Ramadi, Mosul and Suwayrah, south of Baghdad.

In Baquba, insurgents attacked 1st Infantry Division soldiers with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire near a traffic circle and police station, officials said.

During the fighting, U.S. troops came under fire from a mosque, the U.S. military said. Iraqi security forces stormed the mosque and found rocket-propelled grenades, mortar rounds and other weapons and ammunition, the statement said.

In the neighboring town of Buzhriz, militants killed the town police chief, Lt. Gen. Qassem Mohammed, in an attack on his house, officials said. During fighting in Buzhriz and Baquba, American aircraft dropped two 500-pound bombs on an insurgent position.

A U.S. military spokesman said at least 20 insurgents were killed, although battle reports were still being updated.

Mohammed Zayad of the Baquba hospital said nine Iraqis — one attorney, a policeman and seven civilians — were killed and 11 Iraqis were injured in the fighting. It was not clear to what extent his count overlapped with the U.S. count of 20 insurgents killed. The 1st Infantry Division soldiers were wounded, although two of them returned to duty, the military said.

Stripes reporter Lisa Burgess and Associated Press reporters Edward Harris in Fallujah and Robert H. Reid, Samer N. Yacoub, Marfan Fann, Sabah Jheir, Mustafa Krdovac and Magpie Mehal in Baghdad contributed to this report.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Sunday at least 1,186 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 903 died as a result of hostilities, the Defense Department said as of Friday. The figures include three military civilians. The department did not provide an update over the weekend.

The AP count is 20 higher than the Defense Department's tally, which was last updated Friday at 10 a.m. EST.

The British military has reported 74 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia have reported one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,048 U.S. mili-

tary members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 794 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Capt. Kevin J. Dempsey, 23, of Monroe, Conn., killed Saturday in Anbar province; assigned to 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Nicholas H. Anderson, 19, of Las Vegas, died Friday in a vehicle incident while conducting combat operations in Anbar province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

■ Army Sgt. James C. Matteson, 23, Celoron, N.Y., died Friday in Fallujah when

a grenade struck his vehicle; assigned to the Army's 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Vilesek, Germany.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Wesley J. Canning, 21, Friendswood, Texas; killed Wednesday in Anbar province; assigned to 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

■ Army Maj. Horst G. Moore, 38, of San Antonio, Texas; died Tuesday in Mosul when enemy mortar rounds detonated within his unit living area; assigned to the Army's 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), Fort Lewis, Wash.

■ Army 1st Lt. Edward D. Iwan, 28, Albion, Neb.; died Friday in Fallujah when a grenade struck his vehicle; assigned to the Army's 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Vilesek, Germany.

■ Army Sgt. Jonathan B. Shields, 25, Atlanta; died Friday in Fallujah when he was accidentally struck by a tank; assigned to the Army's 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (Armor), 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

■ Army Spc. Raymond L. White, 22, Elwood, Ind.; died Friday in Baghdad when his patrol was attacked with small arms fire; assigned to the Army's 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (Armor), 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. David M. Branning, 21, Cockeysville, Md.; killed Friday in Anbar province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Brian A. Medina, 20, Woodbridge, Va.; killed Friday in Anbar province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

Engineers fortify Iraq-Syria border

Soldiers take a break from urban combat to build forts for Iraqi troops

BY JULIANA GITTLER

Stars and Stripes

NEAR SINJAR, Iraq — A long, sandy berm is all that separates the flat, empty border between northwestern Iraq and Syria.

But soldiers with the 276th Engineer Battalion from the Virginia National Guard are building 15 rudimentary forts that they say will help seal the porous border.

"There was nothing out here," said the Company A commander, Capt. Jonathan Gray, who is in charge of the project which spans nearly 150 miles.

The forts serve as tiny footholds for the fledgling Iraqi border patrol in an area where smugglers are common. U.S. officials have said anti-coalition foreign fighters, supplies and money have been flowing across Iraq's open borders.

For the soldiers, the project was a break from their daily expo-

sure to makeshift bombs and city fighting.

"We went from an urban environment to a rural environment where our primary mission was not combat objectives," said Sgt. Matthew Gowin, from Mechanicsville, Va., who became a plumber for the project. "It turned out better than I thought it would."

"Engineers love to leave something behind," said Lt. Col. Edward Morgan, the battalion commander. "In a sense this will be our little mark."

Fortified borders will help Iraq maintain control of its own country and help reduce risks from foreign fighters to servicemembers there.

The forts consist of a perimeter with a tower and coner, living area. Personnel will have running water, electricity, heat and air conditioning — "All the basic life support," Gray said.

The project added fortifications



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Soldiers from Company A of the 276th Engineers Battalion work on a tower at one of 15 forts they built on the Iraq-Syria border. The forts will serve as tiny footholds for the fledgling Iraqi border patrol.

to the large stretches between a few existing border posts. They're temporary, built to last about a year, by which time Iraq should have new forts built.

It took an orchestrated effort to move the coner and heavy construction equipment two hours into the desert, while maintaining security.

"You can't hide that on the highways from the bad guys," Morgan said.

"That was the hardest part, loading and unloading," said Sgt. Timothy D. Atkins, attached to Company A, and a land surveyor in his civilian life in Mechanicsville. "It's a major endeavor to push that much stuff and do it as fast as we were, and leapfrog from site to site."

For some soldiers, the project was the third trip to the border. The support platoon fortified the berm in the spring, returned in August to repair the existing forts and again in October for the project.

They had to beg and borrow enough equipment for the job.

"That coordination took months. The actual mission took like 16 days," said Sgt. James Timberlake, support platoon sergeant from Powhatan, Va.

"Instead of just pushing a dirt pile for 200 miles, [you] start from nothing and have a complete project," he said.

"It was a lot different than what you see on the news," Gowin said. "We had limited contact with the people in the past."

The project had its share of difficulties, among them drastic variations in temperature, desert creepies crawlies and no facilities. It was pure field living, down to the sandstorm that ruined a meal.

"Nothing but scorpions and rats" out there, Atkins said.

But they enjoyed it. Working on the project was like a camping

trip and gave them a chance to build, the soldiers said.

"I never even knew there were that many stars," Atkins said. "It was definitely a good experience being out there."

The job also gives them a sense "that this will make a difference," Atkins said. "If it works, they could stop insurgents entering the country."

Pvt. Chris Perry, from Midlothian, Va., joined the company right before the project began, his first for the Army. At the

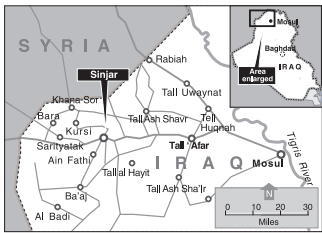
time, he was reading a book written before the war that stressed the importance of fortifying the border with Syria.

"I think it's pretty vital that we shut down that border," Perry said. "I'm glad to be a part of it."

E-mail Juliana Gittler at: gittlerj@spjstars.osd.mil

"Engineers love to leave something behind. ... In a sense this will be our little mark."

Lt. Col. Edward Morgan



PETER JAEGER/Stars and Stripes



RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Brig. Gen. Oscar Hilman cuts the ribbon to open a new military working dog kennel at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq.

New dog kennel dedicated at Anaconda

BY RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq — As the kennel was being built to house the military working dogs at LSA Anaconda, Capt. William Allen Jr. was struck by a bit of inspiration.

The kennel, he believed, should be named for a military policeman, Staff Sgt. Arthur S. Mastrapa, killed at the base during a rocket attack in June.

"We responded to the attack. He died at the scene," said Allen, commander of the 362nd Military Police Detachment, a reserve unit from Ashley, Pa., but made up of soldiers from several states.

Mastrapa, 35, was not part of Allen's unit, but the kinship between military cops made the link an easy one. Plus, Allen said, there was something he saw in the news coverage of Mastrapa's funeral in the States.

Building named for MP killed during attack

"His daughter was clutching a puppy near the casket," Allen said. "It just kind of ... I don't know."

The kennel opened Thursday afternoon as the sun set on Veterans Day. In a short ceremony, prayers were offered, Mastrapa's biography was read, and Brig. Gen. Oscar Hilman, commander of the 81st Brigade Combat Team, cut the ribbon.

Allen's unit was the first to have military working dogs at this base. The dogs are capable of detecting bombs and drugs or can be used for simple patrolling.

"It's a prestige job to have," said Allen, because the military spends a lot of money training the dogs before placing them in the hands of a soldier.

Hilman called the dogs a "combat multi-

plier" in the effort against insurgents. Because of security concerns, the exact size of the kennel could not be released, according to military officials.

Mastrapa had been an MP while serving on active duty in the 1980s. He joined the reserves on June 16, 2000, and worked as a mailman in civilian life in Altamonte Springs, Fla.

He was assigned to the 351st Military Police Company from Orlando, Fla., and worked as a driver and gunner during Operation Iraqi Freedom. After his death, he received a Bronze Star Medal.

He and his wife, Jennifer, were parents to Marissa and Reece.

A plaque will be placed on the kennel to honor Mastrapa's memory.

Allen said he spoke with Jennifer Mastrapa about the kennel dedication. She told him it was a good thing to do.

"She said she felt like the Army hadn't forgotten her," he said.

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensenr@mail.estrates.osd.mil

"[Staff Sgt. Mastrapa's wife] said she felt like the Army hadn't forgotten her."

Capt. William Allen Jr.

U.S. military leaders gather to plan strategy

Officers seek to keep momentum from Fallujah fight in approach to other Iraqi cities

BY JOHN HENDREN
Los Angeles Times

BAGHDAD — The United States' top military commanders converged here Sunday to craft a strategy for using the momentum from a seemingly successful anti-insurgent battle in Fallujah to pacify other embattled Iraqi cities, pressing toward a decisive "tipping point" in the war.

In an unusually high-profile mid-battle gathering, Gen. Richard J. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived from Washington, and Central Command chief Gen. John P. Abizaid flew in from his regional headquarters in Qatar. They met with the top U.S. ground commander in Iraq, Gen. George Casey, his Iraqi counterparts and the American generals in charge of Iraq's various regions.

Unlike Myers' occasional visits to troops in Iraq, the general planned this tour to discuss war strategy with senior commanders regarding the ongoing battle in Fallujah and the outbreaks of unrest in other areas, including Baghdad and the northern city of Mosul.

As many as 1,600 insurgents in Fallujah

were killed so rapidly that the streets were littered with an "alarming" number of bodies, senior defense officials said, despite Muslim strictures that require burial within 24 hours.

The American commanders expect to use information gleaned from the dead and from interrogations of an estimated 1,000 captured rebels to find insurgent leaders — possibly including the best-known guerrilla, Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi — who the commanders said left Fallujah ahead of the past week's fighting.

"I think Fallujah will show us where the leadership is," Abizaid said. "I think there are quite a few people that are in our hands right now that will tell us an awful lot about their organization."

Yet uprisings in Mosul and elsewhere suggested many insurgents might have fled to fight elsewhere.

"The insurgency is like water, and when you squeeze it, it kind of goes like water," Abizaid said.

The gathering, which commanders described as the result of visits independently scheduled before the latest confronta-

tion in Fallujah, was marked by a renewed optimism among Pentagon strategists that they were making progress despite a recent rise in attacks by a stubborn insurgency.

"You never know how close you are to a tipping point," said a senior defense official involved in the talks, who requested anonymity.

U.S. and Iraqi military commanders are setting their sights on a smaller hubbed of insurgency, Ramadi, as the next likely focus of a major anti-insurgent onslaught. The deployment used to seize control there is expected to be smaller than the 10,000 American and 2,000 Iraqi forces used in nearby Fallujah.

Iraqi and U.S. officials continued to express optimism over the prospect of nationwide elections for a new Iraqi government in January but said that depended on driving insurgents from Fallujah and Ramadi, the capital of Al Anbar province.

The province is considered particularly crucial because Al Anbar is predominantly Sunni Muslim. Authorities hope that Sunnis — who were loyal to ousted President Saddam Hussein, a fellow Sunni, and have

since supported and fought in the insurgency — could be placated by participating in a new government.

Sunnis also offer a counterbalance to Iraq's majority Shiite Muslims, who Bush administration officials fear could use their power at the ballot box to steer the historically secular nation toward an Iranian-style theocracy.

Commanders intend for a bloody battle against insurgent fighters in Fallujah to send a message to Iraqis elsewhere who ally themselves with extremist groups: Those who cooperate with radical insurgents, even in the short term, will find themselves targets.

"The coalition and the Iraqis will not tolerate temporary alliances of convenience," said Abizaid, who visited Fallujah on Sunday before a late night meeting with Myers, Casey and Iraqi commanders.

U.S. military officials have been surprised by the aggressiveness of the insurgents. Attacks have been on the rise throughout Iraq, reaching 130 a day as of Friday, the defense official said. But the attacks have been weaker in recent days, he added, including a fair amount of return fire directed at U.S. and Iraqi troops.

Relief convoy turns back from Fallujah because of danger

BY ALEXANDER G. HIGGINS
The Associated Press

GENEVA — A relief convoy of ambulances and supplies reached the edge of Fallujah on Monday, but turned back after Red Cross officials decided it was too dangerous to proceed deeper into the city, officials said.

Ahmed Rawi, the Baghdad spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said the Iraqi Red Crescent convoy of four ambulances and four trucks carrying supplies reached Fallujah General Hospital on the outskirts of the city, but was unable to go into the conflict zone.

Ismail al-Haqi, director of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, said he had decided it was too dangerous for the convoy to proceed.

"I can't sacrifice the lives of the volunteers; it is very dangerous to go inside Fallujah now and we preferred not to enter," al-Haqi said, denying an earlier Red Crescent statement that claimed U.S. forces had killed Iraqi officials turned back the convoy.

The Red Crescent and Red Cross have been unable to gain access to people inside Fallujah during more than a week of fighting between U.S. and Iraqi government forces and insurgents.

The hospital itself was well-supplied, because no patients or wounded people have been able to reach it from the embattled city, Rawi said. "By the way, there was no patient in sight," he said.

Fardous al-Ubaidi, spokeswoman

for the Iraqi Red Crescent, said earlier that U.S. forces and the Iraqi government prevented the aid convoy from crossing the Euphrates River into the main part of the city and told it to leave the hospital area as well.

Rawi told The Associated Press by telephone that the convoy then went to the south in hopes of entering nearby Amiriyah al-Fallujah, where there are civilians who have fled the fighting.

Mu'in Kassir, ICRC's spokesman in Amman, Jordan, said the agency planned to send investigators to two Fallujah suburbs, Karma and Asaklawia, Tuesday to check on the condition of hundreds of displaced families there.

Kassir said the ICRC was concerned about people living in tents and other makeshift shelters in the cold weather, and had preliminary reports of fever, diarrhea and other illnesses in the camps, especially among children.

Kassir also said the ICRC had reports that people in areas of Fallujah not under the control of the U.S.-led forces had no access to medical care.

"We urge all parties, either the American forces or the Iraqi government, to secure the lives of people of Fallujah; this is very important," Rawi said.

He said the government should at least restore service from one of Fallujah's two main water treatment plants so that civilians can have drinking water.

Robert H. Reid and Tini Tran of The Associated Press contributed to this report from Baghdad.

Honoring those lost on a symbol of tragedy



A U.S. Marine of the 1st Division writes the words "Dark Horse" on a beam of the bridge western Fallujah, Iraq, where the bodies of two American contractors killed by militants were strung up in March, sparking the earlier U.S. siege. An earlier message left by soldiers reads: "This is for the Americans of Blackwater that were murdered here in 2004, Semper Fidelis 3/5."

Allawi: Baghdad airport to be reopened

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Baghdad's international airport will reopen to civilian traffic Monday after being closed for a week under a state of emergency declared before the U.S. assault on Fallujah, Iraq's prime minister said Sunday.

"Tomorrow we will open the airport and we will open the borders so Iraqis can resume their normal lives," Prime Minister

Ayad Allawi said in an interview with Iraqiya television.

The airport was closed for 48 hours under the state of emergency decree announced Nov. 7. The shutdown order was extended several times.

It appeared the decision to reopen the airport was made because the weeklong fighting in Fallujah was winding down.

But Allawi said a Syrian border crossing point at Qaim would remain closed.

The area has been the scene of recent clashes between U.S. Marines and insurgents.

Syrian border officials said Sunday that Iraq already had reopened two crossings on the countries' shared border following a 10-day closure.

However, travelers and border officials told The Associated Press that traffic was light, and motorists were advised they would not be allowed to return.

Quilt honors memory of soldier lost in Iraq

By CATHY DYSON

The (Fredericksburg, Va.) Free Lance-Star

STAFFORD, Va. — On the afternoon that her wedding was supposed to have taken place, a Kentucky woman got a package from Stafford County.

It came from people she'd never met, yet contained an item she'll always treasure.

The gift was a quilt, made from bits and pieces of old T-shirts and Army uniforms that belonged to the man Stacey Martinez had planned to marry.

But her wedding dreams — and her future with the soldier she loved — had ended on a battlefield months earlier. Her fiance, 2nd Lt. Jeff Graham, was killed in central Iraq when a bomb exploded as he led his unit on foot patrol.

Graham had attended several Stafford schools when his military family was based in the area, and graduated from Brooke Point High School in 1998. He was 24 when he died on Feb. 19, and his funeral was held in the same Frankfort, Ky., church where he and Martinez had made some of their wedding arrangements.

So, when Nov. 6 rolled around, Martinez wasn't expecting any presents. She opened the package from Virginia, then "cried and cried and cried," she said during a phone interview from her home in Elizabethtown. "The quilt's been with me ever since," she said. "It's on my lap right now."

Martinez immediately called Graham's parents, Carol and Mark Graham, who are stationed at Fort Sill, Okla., where Mark Graham is awaiting promotion to general.

Martinez couldn't talk much through her tears, so she let her mother describe each block of the quilt to Graham's mother.

"Stacey was kind of curled up with the quilt, touching each square," Carol Graham said during a phone interview. "I could hear her say, 'Oh, I remember when Jeff wore this.' It'd be heart good."

Carol Graham was a substitute teacher at Brooke Point when her family lived in

Stafford, and still has connections in the area.

She had contacted members of the Stafford Piecemakers Quilters Guild in September and asked them to make a memory quilt for Martinez, a 25-year-old pharmacist.

Martinez was having a tough time with the loss, especially as the date of the planned wedding loomed.

Carol Graham hoped a quilt, made from clothes her son used to wear, would provide some comfort. So she begged us for some shirts from Jeff Graham's days at the University of Kentucky. She tossed in a camouflage uniform, a dress shirt and a couple of pairs of boxers.

She also threw in his helmet bag, which was one of the items the Grahams got back from the war zone. Their son's handwriting was still visible, and read, "Graham J. C. Co. 134 AR."

Nancy Brothers and other Stafford quilters went through the bag and started piecing. They turned each T-shirt into a 14-inch block and backed it with stiff fabric to keep the stretchy material in place. They cut smaller blocks, slightly bigger than postage stamps, from every other garment in the bag, such as Graham's red plaid or black silk boxers. They sewed these into the borders of the individual blocks, at the four corners.

The shirts reflect Graham's service to the Army and his love of sports, especially the Kentucky Wildcats. One square screams, "Go Big Blue," and another shows a red numeral "1," the symbol of the Army's First Infantry Division. One block recalls the Outback Bowl of 1999, when Kentucky played Penn State, and another, "the eRUPTION Zone," honors Rupp Arena, where Wildcats basketball games are played.

Because there's so much blue in the T-shirts, the quilters decided to add red and white to make a patriotic theme. They



Wendy Lopez of Stafford Piecemakers, a quilting group in North Stafford, Va., works Nov. 1 on a memory quilt for Stacey Martinez, whose fiancee, 2nd Lt. Jeff Graham, was killed in central Iraq when a bomb exploded as he led his unit on foot patrol. The quilt is made from his clothes that his parents gave the group.

put a white border, with silver stars, around each of the 12 blocks, and outlined the quilt in burgundy. The quilt measures 62 by 80 inches.

Four of the five women who worked on the quilt gathered at Widewater Elementary School on Election Day. Brothers, Beth Price, Wendy Lopez and Catherine Thoeing brought their sewing machines to the library and set up an ironing board nearby. Pat Fitzpatrick later stitched the entire quilt together.

"Once we started on this, we realized we had a lot more in common [with the Grahams] than we thought," Brothers said. Few people have suffered the scope of tragedy the Grahams have recently.

Jeff Graham was the second son Carol and Mark Graham lost in a year.

In June 2003 their younger son, Kevin, hanged himself. He suffered from depression, but had stopped taking antidepressants because he wanted to stay in the Army and didn't want the drug showing up on a medical exam.

The Graham family, along with Stacey Martinez, are trying to survive their losses, Carol Graham said.

"We'll never get over it, we just try to get through it," she said. Reminders that others still care help them, she said.

"We're doing the best we can, thanks to people like these ladies, and all their love and support," she said. "You don't feel like people have forgotten."

Fallujah battle creates traffic jam at ammunition depot

By JACKIE SPINNER

The Washington Post

NEAR FALLUJAH, Iraq — The truck roared up in a blizzard of white dust, its wheels spinning in the fine powder that covered the fenced-in lot known around here as the "BLAHA." The driver was in a hurry. The drivers were always in a hurry, and the Marines running the lot knew that without asking.

A forklift operator began moving stacks of 155mm artillery rounds onto the truck. A short distance away, Lance Cpl. Jorg Lozano and Pvt.

Timothy Haney each grabbed a 112-pound box of mortar shells and hoisted it onto a stack of rounds. They walked so fast that the dust kicked up by their boots covered them like a swarm of bees.

"Sometimes it's so busy we have to load the ammo by hand," said Lozano, 19, of Laredo, Texas. "But I know I keep the blood flowing."

"What makes the blood flow, Lozano?" asked Cpl. Johnathan Castille, of Lafayette, La., drilling the junior Marine.

"Ammo," Lozano replied. "Ammo, ammo." Haney said, chiming in, until the only sound in



JACKIE SPINNER/The Washington Post

Lance Cpl. Jorg Lozano, 19, of Laredo, Texas, stacks 112-pound boxes of mortar shells at the fenced-in lot known as the "BLAHA." Since the battle of Fallujah started, few places at this main Marine outpost near the city have been as busy as the BLAHA, an Army acronym that stands for "Basic Load Ammo Holding Area."

the yard was the two Marines chanting "ammo, ammo."

Since the battle of Fallujah started one week ago, few places at this main Marine outpost near the city have been as busy as the BLAHA, an Army acronym borrowed by the Marines that stands

for "Basic Load Ammo Holding Area." When the artillery batteries need cannon and mortar shells or the troops on the front line need flares and grenades, this is the place.

Because of the large scale of the offensive operation, the

ammo crews have been working nearly nonstop, trying to fill orders for U.S. and Iraqi security forces who continued Sunday to battle the last insurgent holdouts.

Most hours of the day and night, trucks line up, sometimes six to eight deep, waiting for ammo. The six Marines on duty round around counting carts and boxes of mortar shells, smoke grenades and tank rounds, filling the orders and then loading them onto supply trucks.

"Our mission here is get the customer out of here as fast as possible," said 1st Lt. Ben Chase, 25, of New York City, a logistics officer for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Combat Service Support Battalion. "Everyone needs it immediately. Everything is an emergency. I tell my Marines basically to run themselves ragged."

Lozano scurried by, like Chase carrying a round notebook.

"Who's coming in?" Castille called after Lozano.

"Twenty-four MEU," Lozano answered, referring to the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

"How much they picking up?"

"A lot," Lozano replied, before rushing off.

Because of the massive amounts of artillery lobbed dur-

ing the Fallujah offensive, logistics officers have been scrambling to make sure their units are adequately supplied. Inventory is measured in colors: green, amber, red and black. Green is a full supply and black means the ammo stock is empty.

"At no time have we gone black, but there have been many times we were getting really, really close," said 1st Lt. Johnny Fortenberry, 31, a Task Force 2-2 soldier with the Army's 1st Infantry Division.

Castille said the Marines and soldiers have favored the larger explosives for the Fallujah operation.

"They love the stuff that goes boom," he said, walking through aisles of grenades and mortar shells in a spacious warehouse stacked with small-arms ammunition. "It's safer to throw one of these things into a building and then they can go in after it's clear."

Haney said the Marines supplying the ammo feel that they are part of the battle, even if they aren't fighting the insurgents face to face.

"If they didn't have us, they'd be lost," he said. "They wouldn't be able to fight. I feel really a part of what's going on out there."



BRADLEY SAPP/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Sailors man the rails awaiting liberty call aboard the destroyer USS Fletcher earlier this year in San Diego. The former Pearl Harbor-based ship is part of the Navy's Sea Swap Initiative, a program that rotates four crews through a single ship at six-month intervals.

Problems with Sea Swap cited in GAO report

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER

Stars and Stripes

NAVAL STATION ROTTA, Spain — A highly touted Navy program that swaps crews at sea may offer some benefits, but a new congressional report shows that trial runs have also produced poor sailor morale and ship maintenance problems.

The Government Accountability Office reported last Wednesday that the service also has not backed up its claims that rotating crews is a cheaper and better way to do business.

Investigators determined the Sea Swap Initiative could take a long-term toll on ships and dropped a heavy workload on crews. Many sailors in each of the four groups complained about poor morale and quality of life because they had to spend more time maintaining the ships. Crewmembers aboard patrol coastal ships, for example, complained that they could not have any port visits because they were too busy tackling maintenance issues.

Sailors aboard the USS Higgins and patrol coastal ships disliked the swap so much that they reported "a strong desire to not participate on any more crew rotations implemented like their most recent experience," the report said.

The GAO found that re-enlistment was generally lower on guided-missile destroyers that swapped crews compared with similar Pacific Fleet ships that didn't swap crews, but the Defense Department wrote that the Navy found "significantly different" figures.

The report said rotating crews is a possible alternative to traditional way of sailors leaving and returning with their ships. But in-

vestigators recommended that the Navy do a better job evaluating the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of swapping crews, establish standard procedures for rotations and make sure commanders share "lessons learned." The Defense Department agreed with the suggestions and cited how changes would be made.

While senior Navy officials have sung the praises of Sea Swap as a way to save money and slash personnel, the latest report mirrored an earlier study by the Center for Naval Analyses, a federally funded research and development group.

The center found that swapping crews had been successful, but the Navy should address morale and maintenance problems. Surveys showed that 84 percent of the crews who handed over their ship to another crew said participating in the swap was worse than expected.

The Navy started rotating crews about two years ago, when three Spruance-class destroyers began the first phases of the first rotation.

The Sea Swap Initiative involves deploying one ship for 18 months or longer and rotating crews. Here's how it works: Instead of crews driving the ship back to the United States after a deployment, they fly home and a new crew is flown in to replace them.

By eliminating long transit times, the Navy says crews will have more time to execute their missions. The Navy has tested the concept with smaller ships but is looking at expanding the program to larger ships such as amphibious assault ships.

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Soldiers at Landstuhl recall hard-fought Fallujah battles

BY SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Getting the Purple Heart Medal for his war wounds doesn't mean Spc. Kris Clinkscales is a hero.

"Getting the Purple Heart just means the rocket found me," quipped the 22-year-old sniper from the 1st Cavalry Regiment's 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Hood, Texas.

Clinkscales spoke with reporters Monday while recuperating from wounds sustained a week ago in the massive offensive on the one-time insurgent stronghold of Fallujah. He took shrapnel to his right elbow and has temporarily lost some movement in the hand.

The four wounded servicemen paraded in front of the throngs of media representatives at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center were in good spirits and up to cracking periodic jokes between renditions of how they sustained their wounds.

Lance Cpl. Ryan Chapman, 22, of Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment based at Camp Pendleton, Calif., took a bullet to the head from a sniper he had been hunting.

"Everyone keeps telling me I'm lucky. I'll go with that," said the TOW missile launcher. "It's nothing too serious. [The bullet] cracked my skull, but it looks worse than it really is."

Since Saturday, the U.S. Army hospital has received 223 battle-injury patients from Iraq, of whom 16 are in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit and 196 already have been medicated to stateside hospitals for further treatment, spokeswoman Marie Shaw said.

The four troops described the fierce battles they faced and the wounds that put them on operating tables, most for multiple surgeries.

The insurgents were well prepared for the offensive, the troops said. They effectively set up organized fighting positions throughout the city, strategically hid snipers, and blanketed the city with makeshift bombs.

And the huge stockpile of AK-47s, ammunition, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars available to the insurgents "shocked" U.S. and Iraqi forces as they launched their massive attack on the city, said



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Talking to the media at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany, Spc. Kris Clinkscales, who was wounded in Iraq, explains how insurgents in Fallujah wore masks over their faces, easily separating them from the general population of the Iraqi city.

Lance Cpl. Jeffery Owens, a supply clerk and machine gunner with Headquarters & Support Company, also with the 3-1. Owens received shrapnel wounds to his left chest.

Clinkscales, who had been in Iraq since March and participated in major offensives in Najaf in August, said the battle for Fallujah was far worse.

In Najaf, insurgents were not as well-equipped, and would launch ill-planned attacks on U.S. forces before retreating to the Imam Ali Mosque, one of the holiest of Islamic mosques, because they "knew it was off limits to us, and [one] the U.S. would not touch," he said.

Eventually, Iraqi forces drew out insurgents or forced them to flee the southern city.

"It was like playing tag as kids, and they'd come out and then run back to their safe base," Clinkscales said of the Najaf offensive.

For months, Fallujah had been a "no-go" zone, a designation that kept forces on the brim of the city and allowed insurgents to build their arsenal.

The one soldier and three Marines said they saw only dead insurgents in the streets of Fallujah, no civilian casualties.

It was easy for the troops to distinguish between the two, Clinkscales said. Aside from the obvious clue of armed men traveling in packs, the insurgents typically are young men, ages 18 to 23, who made it a point to cover their faces often with dark-colored scarves and did not wear the typical long, light-colored robes that the men wear.

Despite it all, the four said they'd return if they could. None sustained wounds that will require them to leave the military.

"If I could get a helmet on," Chapman said, "I'd go back to the jungle on the left side of his head. 'I'd go back. Now. My brothers are still there.'"

E-mail Sandra Jontz at jontzs@stripes.osd.mil.



Lance Cpl. Ryan Chapman points to where a bullet went under his helmet, wounding him during the fighting in Fallujah, Iraq. He is being treated at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany.

More copies of 'Halo 2' expected

If your trigger finger is itching for some aliens, don't despair if you didn't land a copy of "Halo 2" last week. Re-enforcements have arrived and more are on the way.

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service sold all 25,000 of its copies of the space mines-vs.-aliens game for Microsoft's Xbox, exchange spokesman Judd Anstey said Monday. However, 6,000 more copies were due in stores worldwide Monday and another 10,000 are sched-

uled to arrive next Monday, he said.

The AAFES sales were just a small part of last week's "Halo 2" invasion. The highly anticipated game saw a phenomenal \$125 million in sales its first 24 hours of availability, The Associated Press reported.

The original "Halo" was a very popular first-person shooter, creating a ready market for the follow-up version. Boosting the new game's appeal are better graphics and expanded online competition.

Stars and Stripes

IN THE WORLD

Israel open to coordinate Gaza withdrawal

BY LAURIE COPANS
The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel on Monday offered its first indication it was reassessing relations with the Palestinians after Yasser Arafat's death, suggesting it might coordinate a planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip if the Palestinian Authority cracks down on militant groups.

Palestinian leaders reacted cautiously to remarks by Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and argued that Israel should "unconditionally" reopen peace talks under the U.S.-backed "road map" plan.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had previously refused to negotiate the "unilateral disengagement plan" with Arafat, insisting that he was responsible for four

years of fighting. Arafat's death in a French hospital last week has opened up what many leaders believe is a crucial opportunity to revive the Middle East peace process by clearing the way for a more moderate leadership.

If leaders emerge who are willing to stem the violence, Israel is prepared to coordinate the plan to move troops and 8,800 Jewish settlers out of the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements, Israeli officials said Monday. Such coordination is considered critical

to avoid a chaotic transition.

"Israel has every interest that Gaza will be ruled in a responsible manner when redeployment takes place," Shalom told a conference of North American Jews in Cleveland. "If the new leadership on the Palestinian side acts to combat terror, then we will be able to consider coordinating aspects of the 'day after' with them."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regav said Shalom's comments constituted a "new policy." Israel's security establishment is currently examining ways to work with Palestinian security forces to hand them control of the Gaza Strip when Israel withdraws, senior Israeli officials said Monday on condition of anonymity. The recommendations will be discussed with Sharon in an up-

coming meeting of senior officials on the matter, the officials said.

Israeli and Palestinian officials alike have expressed fears that an evacuation from Gaza that is not coordinated would bring chaos to the Gaza Strip, where militant groups have been vying for control in recent months.

In a sign of the uncertainty, shots were fired on Sunday as Mahmoud Abbas, a leading candidate in Palestinian elections on Jan. 9, attended a gathering of people mourning Arafat. Two security guards were killed, and fears were raised that the violence could spiral.

A cease-fire by Palestinian militants is a central Israeli condition for the coordination of the Gaza pullout plan, a senior Israeli official said on condition of anonymity. Israel also expects the Pales-

tinians to disarm the groups, stop anti-Israeli incitement and implement security and financial reforms, the official said.

In response, Palestinian Cabinet Minister Saeb Erekat said he suspected the Israelis would put up too many conditions for coordinating the pullout.

"Israel should talk to us unconditionally," Erekat said. "This line of conditioning things — has been the way government handles things."

The Palestinian Authority is required in the road map to combat militant groups.

The plan, backed by the United States, United Nations, the European Union and Russia, was formally accepted by the sides in 2003 but never got off the ground due to mutual accusations of violations.

U.N. backs Iran's move on uranium

BY GEORGE JAHN
The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — The U.N. atomic watchdog agency gave its support Monday to Iran's agreement to suspend all uranium enrichment activities, the key element of a deal with European countries aimed at ensuring Iran does not develop nuclear weapons.

The United States, which has been pressing for tough U.N. action against Iran, has not yet given its position on any deal, saying Monday it was waiting for word from Britain, Germany and France, the nations negotiating with Tehran. The new agreement appeared to represent a victory by the Europeans after months of stonewalling by the Iranians.

If the tentative deal announced Sunday is sealed, it would prevent Iran from being referred to the U.N. Security Council, where it could face sanctions for its nuclear program. In return for the suspension, Europe has been suggesting it would help Iran in developing peaceful nuclear energy.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said in

a confidential report made available Monday to The Associated Press that Iran's promise to suspend enrichment activities by Nov. 22 would satisfy some of the agency's demands. The document also let open the question of whether Iran tried to develop the technology to make atomic bombs, saying suspicions remain about the nature of nearly two decades of clandestine nuclear programs.

Tehran's deal with the Europeans only postponed the issue of enrichment, committing Iran to a temporary suspension for the time it takes to work out the details of an aid package with the Europeans. If those negotiations fail, Tehran could resume enrichment activities.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei was "not yet in the position to conclude that there are no undeclared nuclear materials" that could have been used for a weapons program, the report said.

But, it said, all nuclear material that Iran has declared to the agency in the past year has been accounted for, "and therefore we can say that such material is not diverted to prohibited [weapons] activities." The report was written by ElBaradei.



Iran's nuclear negotiator, Hasan Rowhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, speaks Sunday with the media after his meeting with French ambassador François Nicoullaud, British ambassador Richard Dalton and German ambassador Paul von Maltzahn in Tehran.

Agency: U.N. must take stronger stand in Darfur

BY RODRIGUE NGWIGI
The Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya — The U.N. Security Council should impose sanctions on Sudan's government and enforce an arms embargo on pro-government Arab militias accused of ethnic cleansing in the country's Darfur region, a human rights group and aid agencies said Monday.

Sudan has failed to disarm and disband the Arab militias responsible for atrocities, instead absorbing some into its security forces to "guard" the camps of the very same displaced civilians whom they had originally burned out of their villages," Human Rights Watch said in its report.

Last week, one of those camps was forcibly dismantled by Sudanese forces, driving the people who sought refuge there back into Darfur's arid countryside, the group said.

The report, "If We Return We Will Be Killed," was released

ahead of the Security Council's special session on Sudan opening in Nairobi, Kenya, on Thursday.

The United Nations says the Darfur conflict has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis, claiming at least 70,000 lives since March — mostly from disease, hunger and hardships from being uprooted. Many more have been killed in fighting since the conflict started in February 2003, but no firm estimate exists.

The conflict has driven 1.8 million people from their homes.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the Security Council on Nov. 3 there were strong indications that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed "on a large and systematic scale" in Darfur.

But a Security Council draft resolution circulated at that time does not impose sanctions on Sudan "for its direct participation in the brutal ethnic cleansing of Darfur's civilians," Human Rights Watch said.

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Israelis say sub spotted off coast

By STEVE WEIZMAN
The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — A foreign submarine sneaked into Israeli waters last week, cruising the coastline near Lebanon before being detected and slipping away, Israeli authorities said Monday.

The vessel belonged to a NATO member country and was detected during the night between Nov. 9-10, an Israeli military official said on condition of anonymity.

Israeli defenses spotted the vessel just inside Israeli territorial waters about 12 miles off the northern coast, the army official said.

Israeli Army Radio said the sub was in the area of Nahariya, a northern Israeli coastal town near the border with Lebanon. The official army statement gave no details of the precise time or location of the incident.

"The navy spotted and tracked last week an unidentified target which was identified as a submarine," a military spokeswoman said.

"After it was spotted and tracked, the submarine left." On Nov. 7, a pilotless drone aircraft flew from Lebanon into Israeli north of Nahariya and released reconnaissance pictures for 20 minutes before flying back across the border, according to the militant Shiite Islamic group Hezbollah, which said it sent the drone.

Israeli military officials said at the time that Hezbollah got the drone from Iran, its major patron, and an enemy of Israel.

Former Israeli naval chief Avraham Ben Shoshan said the main thing was that Israel's coastal defense system detected the intruder shortly after it entered Israeli waters, even though it left before the missile boats were dispatched.

"This submarine was discovered, tracked, stopped its activity and left," he told Army Radio. "The lessons? To build submarines that will give us the same capability to do that to other countries and ... to see what we can do so that even when we are not at sea we can know who is there."



A truck passes road signs that were vandalized to mark out the French names in Sint Genesius Rode in October. Flemish towns along the linguistic frontier that slices Belgium in half where Francophone influence is more prevalent is at the center of political negotiations that start this week.

Belgium's ethnic divide

Rivalry between Dutch-speakers and Francophones flares anew

By RAP CASERT
The Associated Press

HALLE, Belgium — Leafy Victor Mertensstraat hardly has the look of a front line, yet it's in suburban streets like this that Belgium is fighting its latest cultural battle.

Increasingly, homeowners from the overcrowded, mainly Francophone capital of Brussels are seeking the quieter, cheaper life in Dutch-speaking towns of surrounding Flanders — to the chagrin of Flemish politicians who fear a creeping linguistic invasion and have begun taking steps to halt the migration.

Many people on both sides of the Flemish-Francophone divide are busting for a fight over electoral laws that strike at the heart of the bitter, age-old rivalry between this tiny nation's two main ethnic groups.

Most Flemish districts are limited to Flemish-speaking parties, and likewise Francophone areas generally only have French-speaking parties. Halle, though, is a Flemish town that falls in a district where French-speaking parties can appear on the ballot.

Many Flemish parties worry that Halle could be a conduit for Francophone influence in their region. And they are taking their battle to impose the Flemish-only electoral rule in Halle to a special political forum of Belgium's major political parties and regional governments.

Belgium has accommodated the friction between the two rival regions largely by keeping them apart, with decades of painstaking institutional negotiations steadily giving Flanders with its 6 million Dutch-speakers, and Wallonia, with 4.5 million Francophones, more autonomy.

Not to worry, though, Belgium isn't about to disappear, says one expert. "If it does, it will do so together with other states" within the European Union, says Geert Van Istendael, an authority on Flemish-Francophone relations, told Le Soir newspaper.

Though Belgium's political parties are linguisti-

cally split and mostly stay out of each other's electoral districts, Flemings and Walloons are far from divorced from one another in the political realm. All major decisions and changes in the constitution have to have a majority in each language group, forcing them to work together, however deep the political antagonism.

Belgium, Europe's headquarters, often seems a microcosm of the EU, where the aims of greater union are frequently obstructed by narrow interests of member states — whether it concerns the budget, fishing quotas or patent laws. Many Francophones moving out to suburbs like Halle work at EU offices in Brussels.

Almost since the nation's birth in 1830, Dutch-speaking, Catholic Flanders has been pitted against socialist, Francophone Wallonia, with Brussels stuck in between, in a rivalry that transcended language and affected religion and ideological affiliation. Time and again, the cultural strife has led to political crises.

Half a century ago it brought the country to the verge of civil war in a dispute over the royal house, when Flanders wanted to have King Leopold III return out of wartime exile over the objections of Wallonia, which had considered him too friendly to the occupying Germans.

When it came to a vote, the results split along linguistic lines. Riots, demonstrations and the shooting of three protesters ensued and the king decided to abdicate before the situation could deteriorate further.

After independence from the Netherlands in 1830, Belgium basically was a Francophone nation with a huge Flemish underclass.

The Flemish movement gained momentum after World War I, when thousands of Flemish soldiers were sent to their death by Francophone commanders whose orders they could barely understand. And steadily the political weight moved from the Francophone-dominated south to the Flemish north, especially when Wallonia's coal and steel industry went into decline and Flanders' service economy surged after World War II.

More fleeing Ivory Coast

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast — The number of foreigners evacuated after a violent uprising in Ivory Coast has topped 5,000, the French military said Monday, while more than 10,000 African citizens without hope of flights out have fled into neighboring countries.

A French-led exodus from Ivory Coast started Thursday, the first day of calm after five days of burning, looting attacks unleashed by supporters of hard-line President Laurent Gbagbo against French troops and civilians and other foreigners. Since Thursday, French forces have evacuated 4,248 foreigners from a total of 63 countries, French military spokesman Col. Henry Aussavy said. Flights organized by businesses for their employees have taken out about 870 people, Aussavy said, while Spain, Canada, the Netherlands and others have evacuated about 550 others.

The number makes it the largest evacuation in Africa in at least a decade. In 1997, a French led evacuation brought 5,000 foreigners from the Republic of Congo amid election violence and civil war there.

Prime minister quits

SKOPIJE, Macedonia — Macedonian Prime Minister Hari Kostov resigned Monday over disagreements with an ethnic Albanian party in the governing coalition, triggering a government crisis in the ethnically tense Balkan state.

Kostov, who became the prime minister in May, told reporters that he submitted his resignation to the parliament speaker.

"One of the coalition partners ... is promoting partisan interests, nepotism and corruption," Kostov said, referring to the Albanian Union for Integration party, which led the coalition against the government in 2001.

Kostov's resignation needs approval in Parliament. If accepted, President Branko Cervenkovski could name a new prime minister without calling early elections. There was no immediate announcement on when the parliament session would be held.

Greek data inaccurate

ATHENS, Greece — Finance Minister George Aloukoskifis admitted Monday that Greece joined the euro after submitting inaccurate data, but EU officials said there was no danger of the nation being expelled from Europe's common currency.

"It has been proven that Greece's budget deficit never fell below 3 percent since 1999," Aloukoskifis said before heading to Brussels to attend a meeting with the 11 other members of the euro zone.

"We will have a very crucial meeting where we will clarify the budget deficit data," said Aloukoskifis.

Under EU rules, a country's deficit must not exceed 3 percent of gross domestic product to join the euro.

Croatia, Serbia talks

BELGRADE, Serbia-Montenegro — Top officials from Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro pledged Monday to "turn a new page" in relations between two former foes that fought a bloody war in 1990s.

Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and Serbia-Montenegro President Svetozar Markovic also promised to resolve all outstanding issues between the conflict and establish a "good neighborly partnership."

Sanader is on a one-day visit to Belgrade, the first by a Croatian prime minister since Croatia and Serbia fought a war after the breakup of former Yugoslavia in early 1990s.

From The Associated Press

Austrian police round up 'Grandpa Gang' for selling drugs

The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — A major Austrian narcotics ring dubbed the "Grandpa Gang" because of the advanced age of its members sold about \$6.6 million worth of drugs in recent years, police said Monday.

Vienna officials said they have arrested 23 suspected members since October and seized large quantities of cocaine, amphetamines, hashish and marijuana in a raid

on a hairdresser salon in Vienna, police Maj. Martin Roudny told the Austria Press Agency. Police have dubbed the ring the "Grandpa Gang" because most of its members were in their 50s and 60s.

Detectives also confiscated about \$125,000 in cash and several firearms in a raid last month that frightened the alleged ringleader so much that he suffered a heart attack, Roudny said.

The suspect, whose name was not released in line with Austrian privacy laws, was being treated in a prison hospital.

Some of the suspects allegedly pooled their earnings to buy a yacht they shared on Mediterranean vacations, and others lost up to \$9,000 a night on gambling spreads, prosecutors said. The suspects, who procured the drugs from the Netherlands, also were being investigated in a murder case, authorities said.

IN THE STATES

Powell, three others resign from Cabinet

Abraham, Veneman, Paige also leave positions; Rice believed next in line for secretary of state

DEB RIECHMANN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin Powell and three other Cabinet members submitted their resignations on Monday, as the shake-up of President Bush's second-term team escalated. "I believe that now that the election is over, the time has come for me to step down," Powell wrote.

Bush was likely to name national security adviser Condoleezza Rice to replace Powell, senior administration officials said.

The White House released the letter Powell sent to the president on Friday as well as those written by Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, Education Secretary Rod Paige and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, confining their departures.

The announcements earlier of the departures of Attorney General John Ashcroft and Commerce Secretary Donald Evans, along with those disclosed Monday, brought to six — out of 15 — the num-

ber of Cabinet members involved in the post-election exodus.

"I am pleased to have been part of a team that launched the global war against terror, liberated the Afghan and Iraqi people, brought the attention of the world to the problem of proliferation, reaffirmed our alliances, adjusted to the post-Cold War world and undertook major initiatives to deal with the problem of poverty and disease in the developing world," Powell told Bush.

The president already has chosen White House counsel Alberto Gonzales to succeed Ashcroft, and speculation on Powell's successor has centered on Rice and U.N. Ambassador John Danforth, a former U.S. senator from Missouri.

Powell, who long had been rumored planning only a single term with Bush, told the president he intends to "return to private life."

Earlier Monday, he had told aides he intended to leave once Bush settled on a successor, administration officials said.

Secretary Powell's departure is a loss to the moderate internationalist voices in



Secretary of State Colin Powell, right, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, left, arrive for an April 14 news conference at the White House. Powell resigned his Cabinet post Monday.

the Bush administration," said New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, a former U.N. ambassador in the Clinton administration. "Hopefully, his replacement will be a pragmatist rather than an ideologue."

Powell has had a controversial tenure in the secretary of state's job, reportedly differing on some key issues at various junctures with Secretary of Defense

Donald Rumsfeld. Powell, however, has generally had good relations with his counterparts around the world, although his image was strained by the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Powell, a former chairman of the military Joint Chiefs of Staff under the first President Bush, led the current administration offensive at the United Nations for a military attack to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, arguing a weapons-of-mass-destruction threat that the administration could never buttress.

"It's been a joy to work with Colin Powell," British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said. He praised Powell as "a unique figure" who had made the transition "from being a great soldier to being a great statesman and diplomat."

For many months, Powell had been viewed as a one-term secretary of state but he has always been vague about his intentions. He had said repeatedly in recent weeks that he serves at "the pleasure of the president."

Powell's role in shaping foreign policy was one of promoting moderation and traditional diplomatic alliances with friendly nations. His influence was measured, though, since most of Bush's other senior advisers generally took a harder line and they often prevailed.



Paige

Supreme Court overturns death sentence in Texas

BY GINA HOLLAND
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday overturned the death sentence of a convicted Texas killer because jurors in his trial did not consider his learning disability and other evidence.

The unsigned 7-2 decision is another reproach of Texas, which executes more people than any other state.

Texas courts had turned down LaKoyne Lathair Smith's appeal of his sentence for the January 1991 killing of a Taco Bell manager during a robbery attempt in Dallas. The victim, 19-year-old Jennifer Soto, was pistol-whipped, shot and stabbed with a butcher knife.

In the ruling, justices cited their decision five months ago in the case of another Texas death row inmate, Robert Tennard, which opened the door to new challenges from several dozen condemned men in Texas who claim they have low IQs and were not given enough chance to present mitigating evidence to a jury.

"There is no question that a jury might well have considered IQ scores and history of participation in special-education classes as a reason to impose a sentence more lenient than death," the court wrote in Monday's decision.

Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, the most conservative justices, disagreed.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist had joined Scalia and Thomas in opposing the outcome of

the earlier Texas case. Rehnquist, who has been away from the court since last month while receiving chemotherapy and radiation for thyroid cancer, supported the latest decision though no explanation was provided.

Earlier this year, justices lifted inmate Delma Banks' death sentence and delivered a strong rebuke of Texas officials and lower courts for failing to ensure he received a fair trial. The court said prosecutors hid key information that might have helped Banks' case.

Last year, the court sided with a black Texas death row inmate, Thomas Miller-Ell, who claimed prosecutors in Dallas County stacked his jury with whites. The Miller-Ell case will be reviewed by justices for the second time next month because an appeals court again found that he should face the death penalty.

In other decisions:

■ Declined to consider whether a retailer Kmart Corp. should have paid more than \$300 million to key suppliers immediately after filing for bankruptcy protection.

■ Refused to consider whether a Colorado couple must return their adopted son to his Missouri birth mother.

■ Turned down an appeal from cockfighting supporters in Oklahoma seeking to reinstate the blood sport.

■ Declined to resurrect a lawsuit that accuses two German companies of assisting in the massacre of thousands of people in Namibia a century ago.

Plane crashes near apartments in San Antonio



Firefighters survey the wreckage of a small plane that crashed Sunday near the Walnut Manor Apartments in San Antonio. The Piper Navajo, owned by Dash Air Charter of San Antonio, was on approach to San Antonio International Airport when it crashed about three miles away. Officials said at least one person aboard the plane was killed and no one on the ground was injured by the wreckage.

Fingerprinting starts at land border crossings

BY LYNN BREZOSKY
The Associated Press

LAREDO, Texas — Bridges to Mexico in this traffic-choked city began testing a new immigration security program Monday that requires some U.S. visitors to be fingerprinted and photographed as they cross the border.

The screening by the Homeland Security Department was being tested Monday at crossing from Mexico in Laredo and Douglas, Ariz., and from Canada at Port Huron, Mich.

The technology — which also calls for running checks on the visitors — has been in place at U.S. airports and seaports since Jan. 5, but officials want to pinpoint any glitches before the program extends to the nation's 50 busiest land crossings by year's end.

"We always test first," said Anna Hinken, program outreach manager.

Digital fingerprints and photos are matched with databases to determine if visitors might be wanted for immigration problems and crimes or are on lists barring them from entering the country because of suspected terrorists.

Extra security requirements were passed by Congress in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and have been in place for nearly all non-U.S. citizens since January.

The information gathered at the borders will be stored indefinitely in a national database, but Homeland Security officials promised its use would be restricted to ensure privacy.

By the end of 2005, U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology program, or US-VISIT, is scheduled to be used at all 165 land border crossings.

STARS AND STRIPES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR/OPINION

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Focus on mission, not CIB

In regard to the letter "Support soldiers get the shaft" (Oct. 23), I have read many letters coming from both sides.

I have put in many years in the military, both on active duty and in the Guard. It is a shame that people in the military cannot accept the fact that we all support the same mission, in different ways for the same cause. Yes, some have been shot at or had an IED blow up on them. This is deserving of the coveted Combat Infantryman Badge? I don't make that decision, but Army regulations do that for us and that is what we have to live by.

The guys who are infantry have a job to do, according to some of the letters I have read. Yes they do, and most of them do well, just like the support people have a job to do to help support the infantry soldier's mission. Without them, they would never be successful with their missions. Unfortunately, some infantry guys forget this and think they can do it all. If that is the case, then send us home. I am in a battalion that I feel has an important job over here that supports the 1st Infantry Division mission.

We are what we have been called, "The Traubitzers." Our main mission is to keep the main supply route clear of roadside bombs, which means doing patrols for un-limited amounts of time, house raids, convoys, security, combat engineer tasks, explosive ordnance disposal and be military po-lice. So, do we qualify for the CIB? We re-ceived six weeks of infantry training be-

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorials and columns letters that appear in the newspaper, and values letters on topics of im-portance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or base and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

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fore coming to Iraq.

Are we qualified yet? I don't care! Let the infantry guys do it. They've covered battle. What's important here is that we all do what we can to accomplish our mission and help Iraq regain its sovereignty. I will be happy to do my job as best I can and return home with all my soldiers.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Baltzell
POB O'Ryan, Iraq

All flows from GIs' efforts

There are no written words that can ex-plain one's heart at a time like this. The sacrifices you are making are not only for

the Iraqi people but also for all humanity. I believe what you are doing will continue to allow my family and myself to enjoy the freedoms of the United States. No matter the job, you are laying the foundation for the future of the world to build upon.

Opinions will differ on this war; however, there is no division of the significance of your mission. You, the American soldier, are providing hope, strength and a vision for the young and old. I am in awe.

Only a few are allowed the opportunity to make a global difference. Only a few can command the respect and presence with the mere sight of a uniform. Only a few can be called heroes.

One Thanksgiving I was talking with my immigrant father-in-law. He is a faithful, religious man, so I asked him on this special day, "What you are thankful for?" I did not expect his response. He said: "This country, my God and my family."

I had anticipated that God would be first. He is very wise and gives me the following when questioned about the order. "If it was not for this country I could not worship my God or enjoy my family as free as I do now."

Thank you for yesterday, thank you for today and thank you for the hope of tomorrow. The American soldier is on the front line tonight and I do sleep in peace. May God protect and guide you.

Paul Ferris
El Paso, Texas

Second chance to follow laws of war

By DALE MCFEATHERS

Scritps Howard News Service

In his second term, President Bush has an opportunity to rectify the errors in his first, and one of those was the ad hoc assertion of the right of the president to treat captives in the war on terrorism as he saw fit, without regard to U.S. or international law.

That strategy inflicted terrible damage on the United States' reputation as a bastion of human rights and, moreover, it is starting to fall apart piecemeal under legal challenge.

This past week, a federal judge ruled that the military commissions the administration had set up to try the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detainees were unlawful. The judge ruled that the detainees were probably subject to the Geneva Conventions governing the treatment of prisoners of war, and if they are, they must be tried in a regular military court-martial.

The administration says it will appeal, but the legal tide seems to be shifting. The courts have already ruled that the detainees are entitled to challenge their contin-

The administration has insisted that the detainees are illegal enemy combatants, a term of its own devising.

ued detention before a federal judge and are entitled to legal counsel.

The administration has insisted that the detainees are illegal enemy combatants, a term of its own devising. The administration used the illegal-combatant status to justify holding an American citizen and a U.S.-born Saudi uncommunicated. The Supreme Court slapped that down, saying, in essence, either charge them or release them. Rather than charge the Saudi, Yaser Essem Hamdi, whom the administration had hinted was a true bad guy, the administration sent him back to Saudi Arabia and set him free.

The Abu Ghraib prison scandal was another international black eye.

An investigation concluded that the mis-treatment was done by rogue soldiers and reaffirmed that torture is not the policy of the United States. But the graphic pictures and an ill-considered White House memo that seemed to condone torture certainly made it look like it was.

This whole contrived legal edifice is crumbling and the Bush administration should get out from under before it collapses altogether.

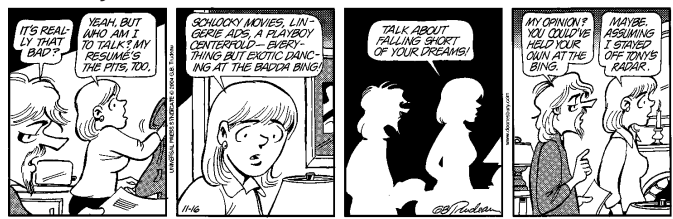
The White House should reaffirm American adherence to the Geneva Conven-tions, restate our longstanding rejection of the use of torture and reiterate its confidence in our civilian and military justice systems.

The White House is right in saying that the war on terror is a different kind of war, but it needn't mean abandoning fundamen-tal principles of human rights. The admin-istrations should draw up — or better yet, expand a commission of respected civil-ian and military jurists to draw up — any necessary new laws and guidelines for fighting that war.

A second term is a second chance to get it right.

Doonesbury

By GARRY TRUDEAU



OPINION

Only comprehensive Mideast plan will help

BY BRENT SCOWCROFT

With a hard-fought election behind us, the United States is now free to refocus its energies on the myriad problems that have a direct impact on its security and destiny. Nowhere do those problems press more insistently on our vital interests than in the Middle East.

The region has been changed forever by the decision to go into Iraq. The debate about the timing and rationale for the war is behind us, but the continued presence of U.S. forces, and changes in the regional balance of power, mean we no longer have the luxury of treating Middle East policy as a series of unrelated events running on separate calendars. We face the need for simultaneous actions to avoid failed states while reducing the incentives to violence and instability that threaten America and friendly states throughout the region.

Iraq, Israel, Iran and terrorism are parts of a whole and can be satisfactorily engaged only as such. To cut through this Gordian knot will require not only a new approach but the deep, sustained commitment of the United States and a significant investment of the president's attention.

But American resolve will not suffice without the willing engagement of other states, especially those of Europe and the region itself. Our appeal to the Europeans, with whom our differences over the Middle East have been significant, must be based on reaching out to them on the Palestinian peace process and Iran, and soliciting their help on Iraq. Similarly, we need to ensure that the Arab states are substantive participants in finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and we must engage them more fully in securing its future.

The goal we seek in Iraq is to create a secure environment in which reconstruction of the economy can vigorously get under way and national reconciliation can proceed. The reality, unpalatable though it may be, is that providing such an environment in a reasonable time frame will require a larger coalition force than is currently deployed there.

This force increment must come either from our own already stretched military or from our friends and allies.

Comfortably re-elected, President Bush is in an excellent position to renew his appeal for a greater international presence in Iraq. The leaders of Europe and the Arab world surely recognize — even if their publics may not — that a failed Iraq would affect their countries every bit as seriously as it would the United States. As evidenced by the NATO deployment in Afghanistan, our allies are also stretched thin. But European willingness to provide even a modest nucleus of troops could provide inducement and cover for other states, especially Muslim ones, to make militarily meaningful contributions. This would also serve to reduce the U.S. profile in Iraq but, if must be emphasized, would not — and should not — provide any near-term basis for reducing our own forces.

This essential step in Iraq needs to be accompanied by a U.S. undertaking to re-avitalize the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Yasser Arafat has passed from the scene. His death represents a sea change in the Palestinian situation and, as Bush has remarked, "an opening for peace." Both the United States and Israel have refused to deal with Arafat. The United States must seize this unique opportunity to make a decisive move.

The president should add substance to his commitment to an independent Palestinian state. It must include steps to provide security to Israel and to give the Palestinians the ability and means to construct a viable political entity free from the crushing presence of Israeli troops. The United States should insist that Israel stop construction of its wall on the West Bank and mirror its withdrawal from Gaza with the evacuation of the West Bank. In return, the wall and Israeli troops would be replaced by an international force, principally European or perhaps NATO troops.

The Palestinians should be pressed to take urgent measures to replace Arafat with political leadership that is both willing and able to undertake responsible negotiations and deliver on its commitments.

Arab friends, notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco, should provide vital guidance, encouragement and support.

The "road map" plan of the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations should be revived and fortified by these actions and vigorously pushed by its sponsors to final settlement. The outlines of such a settlement have, by the otherwise unfortunate stagnation of the process, become much less contested. A unified Jerusalem would serve as capital to both peoples. While the "right of return" could be left as a principle, the reality is that most Palestinian refugees will remain outside Israel, just as most Jewish settlers will return to Israel.

A donor pool may need to be organized to provide compensation for both groups. Border rectifications would be necessary to provide the settlement solution and would complete the package.

A donor pool may need to be organized to provide compensation for both groups. Border rectifications would be necessary to provide the settlement solution and would complete the package.



Substantial, visible progress on the Palestinian issue would significantly improve the atmosphere in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, including Iran, the third side of this triangle of tension and violence. The United States has three objectives with respect to Iran: a cessation of any moves toward nuclear proliferation; cooperation that contributes actively to stability in the Persian Gulf and in Iraq; and Iranian restraint on Hezbollah and other radical groups. To obtain these goals — and encourage European confidence in the United States — must take several initiatives.

To begin, it should modify its attitude toward the British-French-German negotiations with Iran over its pursuit of uranium enrichment capabilities. We should actively embrace the European position, urge the Russians to join us and jointly approach Iran. Such an approach would support Iranian efforts to develop nuclear power, including the offer of an ensured supply of nuclear reactor fuel (low enriched uranium) at concessionary prices — even gratis in exchange for a comprehensive, verifiable freeze of Iran's uranium enrichment program.

[Monday, Iran announced it was suspending uranium enrichment and related activities briefly, voluntarily and in hopes of building confidence in the world that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful.]

Iran not only has strong interests in the fu-

ture of Iraq but a powerful influence through its religious connections to the Shiite majority there. We should engage Iran about the future of Iraq, comparing our separate perspectives and emphasizing our joint intentions.

In that regard, the multilateral discussions over Iraq scheduled later this month at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, should become the start of a dialogue, with U.N. participation. Those discussions could be broadened to include a Persian Gulf security group of nations, blessed and supported by the United States. This could serve to ease Iran's security concerns and temper its urge to acquire a nuclear capability.

Finally, the United States should indicate a willingness to modify its sanctions regime and thereby its relationship to Iran, were Iran willing to restrain Hezbollah and exercise its influence over other extremist groups. This would greatly minimize the risk that violence and other radical disruptions would hinder the Palestinian peace process.

The stakes are high. Progress in the region, in addition to being extremely critical for its own sake, holds the promise of making a substantial and lasting contribution to the war on terrorism.

Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser under presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush, founder and president of the Forum for International Policy. This column first appeared in The Washington Post.



THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/AP

Mourners take to the streets of the West Bank town of Ramallah on Thursday following the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in France.

tion of the process, become much less contested. A unified Jerusalem would serve as capital to both peoples. While the "right of return" could be left as a principle, the reality is that most Palestinian refugees will remain outside Israel, just as most Jewish settlers will return to Israel.

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Mallard Fillmore

Editor's Note: Apparently, this comic strip has been the victim of an elaborate deception, in which the time-space continuum was tampered with....

to make it appear that JOHN KERRY won the election... This had to have been an inside job done by someone...

...in my own cartoon syndicate. Someone who wanted Kerry to win so badly, that it blundered us already-snaky grip on reality... BUT WHO? WHO?!!

THEY'LL NEVER TIE THIS TO ME... IN FACT, I'VE GOT A MEMO HERE THAT SAYS BUSH DID IT! OR RICHARD MELLON SCAPED... OR SPONGBOB SQUAREPANTS... HE'S EVIL, YOU KNOW...

THURSDAY, 11/16/04

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Traffic passes by the Clinton Presidential Center and Library on the Arkansas River in downtown Little Rock.

Clinton library displays presidential flaws, too

By DAVID HAMMER
The Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — As Bill Clinton's library is unveiled at a gala opening this week, one thing is certain: His messy legacy will be on full display.

One alcove will be dedicated to impeachment, and organizers have promised not to sidestep even Monica Lewinsky or Paula Jones.

The 58-year-old political superstar is expected to draw thousands of thousands of visitors a year to his library.

"Bill Clinton is a rock star," said Skip Rutherford, head of Clinton's nonprofit foundation that built the \$165 million library. "He is Elvis."

The William J. Clinton Presidential Center, a metaphorical "bridge to the 21st century" cantilevered out over the bank of the Arkansas River, opens Thursday as the highlight of a week of programs, exhibits and symposiums.

The week will include an Aretha Franklin concert, a science discussion by astronaut and former Democratic Sen. John Glenn, dedication of new sculptures on the riverfront and at the airport, and a reception to which Whoopi Goldberg, Cicely Tyson and Quincy Jones have been invited.

At Thursday morning's grand opening, speakers will include Clinton, his wife Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, President Bush, and former presidents George H. W. Bush and Jimmy Carter.

Some 30,000 guests have been invited to gather on the library lawn and U2's Bono and The Edge will perform.

Visitors to the 150,000-square-foot glass and steel

center designed by architect James Polshek will get to see how Clinton, his closest advisers and exhibit designer Ralph Appelbaum tell Clinton's story.

Clinton has promised to give scholars early access to previously private policy advice and other documents he isn't required to release until 2006.

He already has written about the Lewinsky and Jones sex scandals, impeachment and his political missteps in his memoir, "My Life."

Hillary Rodham Clinton has said controversial subjects shouldn't be kept out of the library because "it is part of history."

On Friday, she said the library would be "a comprehensive accurate story of the eight years of the Clinton administration."

Because Clinton is still so topical, Rutherford believes the nation's 12th presidential library will establish a new model for presidential libraries. Officials hope the center will draw more than 300,000 visitors a year to Little Rock and help drive the area's economy.

Other presidential libraries have struggled to draw admission-paying visitors.

Rutherford said that's because they are either in sentimental locations too far off the beaten path or are lost in larger metropolises.

Downtown Little Rock is a happy medium, he said.

The library has already had an economic impact. Since the site was chosen in 1997, the depressed surrounding warehouse district has been reinvented and downtown Little Rock is suddenly the place to be, with shiny new condos, hip renovated lofts and swanky restaurants.

Super pill?

Anti-obesity, anti-smoking pill might also fight drug abuse, scientists say

By MALCOLM RITTER
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A pill that helps you lose weight and quit smoking? That was amazing enough to capture headlines last week.

But scientists say the experimental drug might be even more versatile, providing a new tool to help people stop abusing drugs and alcohol, too. It's called rimobant, or Acomplia, and last week researchers reported it could help people not only lose weight but keep it off for two years.

That bursted the drug's reputation after two studies in March, which suggested it could fight both obesity and smoking, two of humanity's biggest killers.

The French pharmaceutical firm Sanofi-Aventis plans to seek federal approval for rimobant next year. But the drug's benefits may go beyond just smokers and obese people, researchers say.

Animal studies suggest rimobant can block the effects of marijuana and help relapse in alcohol and cocaine abuse, said Dr. Charles O'Brien, an addiction expert at the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Once it is approved for treating obesity or smoking, "we'll be able to study it in these other areas and I'll try to get my hands on it as quickly as possible," O'Brien said.

He's not alone in his enthusiasm. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism is interested in seeing whether rimobant can help treat heavy drinkers, said Dr. George Kuno of the institute. No human test results for rimobant in alcohol abuse have yet been published, he said.

But researchers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse reported in 2001 that a single dose of the drug could block the effects of smoked marijuana in people, not just animals. That suggests the drug could be useful in treating marijuana dependence, said Mari-

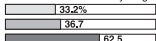
Quit smoking without weight gain

A new drug developed by Sanofi-Aventis promises to help people lose weight and quit smoking by targeting the "pleasure center" of the brain. In a study of 3,040 obese people, the drug, Acomplia, helped them lose up to an average of 19 pounds and keep it off for a year and a half.

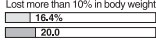
Benefit by dosage

— Acomplia dose —
□ Placebo □ 5mg. □ 20mg.

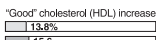
Lost more than 5% in body weight



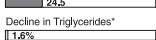
Lost more than 10% in body weight



'Good' cholesterol (HDL) increase



Decline in Triglycerides*



Average inches lost from waistline



* Measured to determine coronary risk factors

SOURCE: Sanofi-Aventis AP

lyn Huestis, principal investigator of the study. The institute is now pursuing follow-up research, said Huestis, acting chief for chemistry and drug metabolism research at NIDA.

Specter faces debate over whether he should chair Judiciary panel

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As Congress returns from an election break to wrap up work for the year, a key focus will be on whether moderate Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., should chair the committee that considers President Bush's judicial nominations.

Republicans increased their Senate and House majorities in the Nov. 2 balloting and want to complete the lame-duck session swiftly to clear the path for Bush's second-term initiatives of changes in the tax and Social Security systems and lawsuit limitations.

But before ending the 108th Congress, lawmakers must deal with spending bills covering most federal domestic programs for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, vote to raise the government's borrowing limit on the national debt and confront a stalemate on legislation to reshape intelligence agencies.

One focus when the Senate reconvenes Tuesday will be the efforts of Specter to convince fellow Republicans he deserves

to be the next Judiciary Committee chairman. Opposition has arisen over Specter, who supports abortion rights, as a result of his postelection statements that nominees with anti-abortion views would have a tough time winning Senate confirmation.

Specter has since stressed that he would be a team player if he succeeds the current chairman, Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, who is stepping down under Senate term-limit rules.

Specter told ABC's "This Week" on Sunday that he had never applied a litmus test to Supreme Court nominees and had voted for anti-abortion judges. "I have supported all of President Bush's nominees in the committee and on the floor, and those go right to the heart of factual matters of con-

cern," he said.

The issue has taken on more urgency because of the possibility of impending openings on the Supreme Court.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, 80, is seriously ill with thyroid cancer, and three other justices have had cancer. The average age of the nine court members is 70. Speculation on a Supreme Court retirement has grown in part because there has been no vacancy in more than 10 years.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., said Specter must still make his case to Republican senators.

A chairman is responsible to "the feelings, the beliefs, the values, the procedures that are held by the majority of that committee," which overwhelmingly opposes abortion, Frist told "This Week Sunday."

And he said he would expect the committee's head "to have a strong predisposition" to supporting the president's nominee in committee and the full Senate.

Frist also said he was determined to prevent Democrats from using filibusters to block judicial nominations, as they did 10

times in the current Congress.

One possibility, he said, is what many call the "nuclear option," where a filibuster, which needs 60 votes to be broken, no longer will be allowed for judicial confirmations.

Democrats, who lost four seats in the election and will have 44 seats with one independent ally in the 100-member Senate next year, say that would be an intolerable infringement on minority rights.

The main task of Congress when it returns will be approving nine spending bills for the current budget year.

Frist said Bush's plans to overhaul tax laws and Social Security will get top billing in the next Congress convening in early January.

The Senate might make another attempt to approve a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, which failed this year, he said.

Activist judges start to tear it (the institution of judges) down, we're going to bring it back to the floor quicker," Frist said.



Specter

Sunday: Most car seats don't stop whiplash

BY DEE-ANN DURBIN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than half of car seats as currently constructed do not do a good job of preventing whiplash injuries, tests by the insurance industry show.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which released Sunday, said that General Motors Corp. cars were among the worst performers, and it said that Volvo and Saab cars were among the best.

Altogether, 97 seat and head-restraint combinations found in 88 cars now on the market were studied by the institute, which tested 73 of those seats in a 20 mph rear-impact crash to see how well they would protect an average-size male dummy.

Sixteen seats earned the institute's highest rating, including those in the Volvo S40, S60 and S80, the Saab 9-2X and 9-3, and the Jaguar S-type.

Sixteen seats, including those in the Chevrolet Malibu and the Subaru Outback, got the second-highest rating of acceptable, 19 seats, including those in the Ford Focus and Mini Cooper, earned the third-highest rating of marginal.

The other 30 received the institute's worst rating, poor, indicating the highest likelihood of neck injury in a rear-impact crash. Among those were the seats in the Audi A4 and S4, the BMW 5 Series, the Dodge Neon and the Jaguar X-type.

The institute did not test 24

Whiplash

The most common injuries sustained in motor vehicle crashes are those to the soft tissue of the neck, commonly termed whiplash:

1. Impact on rear end of vehicle

Shoulders travel forward until they are under head and neck extends forward

2. Abrupt stop of vehicle

Head, neck thrown backward, bounce against headrest and thrown forward again



Disks, muscles, ligaments injured

■ About 20% of rear-end collisions result in whiplash in passengers

■ Most recover quickly, some develop chronic condition

Symptoms

■ Neck pain, stiffness

■ Pain, numbness in arm, hand

■ Headaches

■ Shoulder pain

© 2004 KRT Source: Thatcham Research Graphic: Elsebeth Nielsen, Edt Polli

seats — among them in the Buick Regal, Cadillac Seville, Acura RL and Volkswagen Passat — because it determined the headrests were designed in a way that would not protect taller people.

In a statement, GM said it has been following the institute's guidelines for placement of headrests. The company also said it has led development of a headrest that moves according to the force of the crash.

GM said occupants come in many sizes and sit in various positions in the vehicle and cautioned

against making changes based on one test.

"If the test methods chosen are not reflective of reducing real-world harm, there could be significant potential to cause seat design changes that are directionally wrong," GM said.

The institute has evaluated headrests for nearly a decade.

"It's obvious that some automakers are doing a better job than others of designing seats and head restraints to protect their customers' necks in rear crashes," said Adrian Lund, the institute's chief

Vehicles rated for prevention

The Associated Press

Top performers in tests for whiplash prevention by car seat-headrest combinations, as well as 24 car seats not tested because the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety determined they could not protect tall people adequately:

Best Performers: Jaguar S-type (all seats) Saab 9-2X (seats made after September 2004) Saab 9-3 (all seats) Subaru Impreza (seats made after September 2004) Volkswagen New Beetle (seats with adjustable lumbar) Volvo S40 (seats made after February 2004) Volvo S60 (all seats) Volvo S80 (all seats)

Not Tested: Acura RL (all

seats) Buick Century (cloth and leather seats) Buick Regal (all seats) Buick LeSabre (all seats) Buick Park Avenue (all seats) Cadillac Seville (all seats) Chevrolet Cavalier (all seats) Chevrolet Classic (cloth and leather seats) Chevrolet Impala (cloth and leather bucket seats) Chrysler Sebring (manually reclining seats) Honda Civic (base model seats) Mitsubishi Galant (leather seats) Nissan Sentra (base model seats) Nissan Maxima (cloth and leather seats) Pontiac Grand Am (cloth seats) Pontiac Grand Prix (all seats) Pontiac Bonneville (bench and leather seats) Saturn L Series (all seats) Volkswagen Passat (all seats)

Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

operating officer.

Neck injuries sustained in a rear-end crash rarely are life-threatening, but they happen frequently and can be painful and expensive. Neck injuries cost around \$7 billion in insurance claims each year, the institute said.

Whiplash happens when a vehicle is hit from behind and the seat propels forward. If the headrest does not move with the seat, the occupant's neck will bend back and stretch.

On the best-performing cars,

the seat was sturdy but had enough cushion so the occupant's body could sink into it, keeping the head closer to the headrest. The headrests were positioned so they would be close to the back of the head and protect tall occupants.

Some vehicles got different ratings depending on which seats were installed. For example, Chrysler Sebring with power reclining seats got an acceptable rating, but the Sebring with manual reclining seats was not tested because the institute determined its seats were inadequate.

Biographer disputes long-held legend of Jack Daniel

BY MATT GOURAS
The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Jack Daniel's whiskey is liquor built on a legend: an Old No. 7 label, a recipe crafted at the nation's oldest distillery and a medal signifying it as the best whiskey in the world.

But the author of a Jack Daniel biography contends a company that runs the famed distillery has allowed that legend to grow so much that marketing spin has overtaken the facts, and that the most common misconceptions about the whiskey and its founder are simply not true.

"It wouldn't be such a big deal if they didn't pin so much of their marketing on these few items," said author Peter Krass.

But they really do."

Krass makes his case in "Blood & Whiskey: The Life and Times of Jack Daniel," and it has thrown him into a barroom brawl of words with spirits giant Brown-Forman Corp.

Both sides agree that Daniel was a true American success story who learned to make whiskey as a boy and struck out on his own with audacious marketing tactics that included shipping a keg to Queen Victoria.

But Krass said Daniel's was not the first registered distillery in

The mystique of a whiskey

Jack Daniel's whiskey is liquor built on a legend. But a new biography of the whiskey maker questions if the famed distillery allowed that legend to grow so much that marketing spin overtakes the facts.

Legends and lore of Jack Daniel and his distillery according to company history

■ New biography claims

Jack Daniel was born and later raised by Dan Call, a Lutheran minister who owned a whiskey still

Call devoted life to his faith and sold his still to Jack who was 13 years old

Jack refined the whiskey mellowing process through maple charcoal and registered his distillery

Entered whiskey at the World's Fair in St. Louis; it was awarded the World's Fair Gold Medal and honored as world's best whiskey

Around 1905, Jack kicked his office safe after forgetting the combination and broke his toe and got an infection

Whiskey won a gold medal for best Tennessee whiskey as cited in a document from the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair

Jack eventually died from blood poisoning

1850 1863 1866 1875 1904 1911

■ Due to inadequate record-keeping there is no way to prove when Jack was born

■ Land and deed records show Jack didn't go into business until later

SOURCES: Jack Daniel's Distillery; "Blood & Whiskey: The Life and Times of Jack Daniel" AF

the country and never won a gold medal for world's best whiskey.

On the Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 label, the whiskey is touted as being established and registered in 1866. Krass said land and deed records show Daniel didn't go into business until 1875.

Krass said it's also impossible

that Jack's was the first registered distillery because many North American distilleries were registered long before to comply with revenue laws.

Touting a document he said is from the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Krass said Old No. 7 won a gold medal for best Tennessee

whiskey, not best whiskey in the world. Seven others won medals for "world's best American whiskey."

Finally, Krass takes issue with the distillery's claim that the origins of the Old No. 7 label are a mystery. The author said it was the number government regula-

tors first used to identify the whiskey, later adopted by Daniel as the official label once customers became accustomed to seeing it on tax stamps.

Louisville, Ky.-based Brown-Forman counters that it has put together as complete a picture as possible, given the fact that much of the story of Daniel and his whiskey has been passed down from generation to generation. And the company points out that records are inconclusive due to the upheaval of the Civil War, Reconstruction, courthouse fires and Prohibition during the distillery's earlier years.

"Because of inadequate record-keeping there is no way to prove the points on the life of Jack — there is no way to prove even when he was born," Brown-Forman spokesman Phil Lynch said.

Mark Waymack, a professor at Loyola University Chicago and an author of a book on American whiskeys, suspects Krass is probably right.

"It's not an outright falsehood, but it is not necessarily what it's purported to be," he said. "A lot of the hype of the whiskey industry is like that."

Krass said the dispute is hardly trivial "because through this misrepresentation of the industry continues to build their Jack Daniel's brand to the possible detriment of their competitors."

A dog's intuition

RI EXETER — The devotion of a hunter's two dogs probably saved his life after he suffered a stroke early this week, fell and lay in the woods through the coldest night this autumn, conservation officers said.

Steven Goslee's two yellow Labrador retrievers huddled against him all night as the air temperature fell to 15 degrees. In the morning, one pooch ran off to catch the attention of another hunter, who summoned help from game wardens from the Department of Environmental Management.

Puppies burned

CO GOLDEN — A 20-year-old man pleaded guilty to aggravated animal cruelty for stealing five puppies and burning two of them to death.

Ryan Turtura was accused of breaking into a Colorado Humane Society shelter in February and stealing the dogs. Court records said he admitted setting three of them on fire. One of the burned puppies survived.

Turtura could receive up to 10½ years in prison and faces fines of up to \$800,000 when sentenced in January. He has been held on \$25,000 bail.

Fieri bridge crash

IL EAST ST. LOUIS — A commuter van carrying workers from two aerospace companies collided on with a tractor-trailer on a Mississippi River bridge, killing four people in the van and injuring four others, authorities said.

State police said the van was on the Martin Luther King Bridge before dawn when it struck the 18-wheeler, spilling diesel fuel that caught fire near the Illinois end of the bridge. The flames were quickly extinguished.

The wreck closed the busy, four-lane bridge between East St. Louis and St. Louis for about five hours. The bridge is one of three crossing the river at St. Louis.

Thief not camera-shy

CA CAMPBELL — Smile, security camera thief! You just gave police your portrait.

Police are seeking the public's help in identifying a bumbling crook caught in the act by a surveillance camera, which captured his crystal-clear mug shot as he reached up to swipe it.

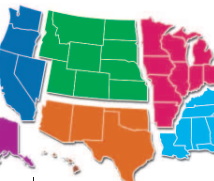
"When these guys help us do our job, I'm very happy," police Sgt. Richard Shipman said. The photographer is a suspect in a string of surveillance-camera heists.

Guard shoots student

LA NEW ORLEANS — A security guard shot a teenager in the foot at a New Orleans high school, believing he was reaching for a weapon during a confrontation.

Tomika Thomas told police she smelled marijuana when she spotted the 16-year-old boy standing alone under a tree outside Booker T. Washington High School when other students were in class or the cafeteria.

Thomas said she approached the student and tried to detain him, but he became aggressive, pushed her, then reached under his shirt.



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police found no drugs or weapons on the boy, who ran away after being shot and was caught by a second security guard.

The student was taken to a hospital. Police said the wound was not life-threatening.

Heartless thieves

MO ST. LOUIS — To Candace Ullrich, it's nothing but heartless — thieves again have put a jobs program for mentally challenged adults out of business by stealing the lawn and landscaping tools of their trade.

This theft was the third in a year for the Horticultural Jobs Program that Ullrich supervises. And not surprisingly, she says the losses — and callousness — are getting old.

News of the burglary, however, has generated an outpouring of generosity, with homeowners offering their extra weed trimmers and lawn mowers. An area lawyer sent, by courier, a \$500 check.

Ullrich hopes the program should be fully stocked soon.

Too close for comfort

NY NEW YORK — An apparently emotionally disturbed man stripped naked and jumped into an exhibit with two young caimans at the Bronx Zoo, police said.

The man, whose name was not

released, was intent on interacting with the alligator-like reptiles, reaching for them while sitting on a rock as stunned police officers — who rushed there from a zoo substation — looked on.

But before he could make contact with the reptiles, a zoo worker slid a plywood board in front of them, preventing the caimans — each about four feet long — from reaching the man.

Cooked-up scholarship

NC RUTHERFORDTON — Ten-year-old Brownwyn Fadem has cooked up \$25,000 for college.

The fifth-grader who likes to cook for her friends won a \$25,000 scholarship with a lasagna dish that impressed a celebrity chef. Brownwyn learned she had won the contest sponsored by All Laundry detergent while appearing on "The Tony Danza Show."

More than 200 young chefs nationwide entered the contest and 25 were named finalists. Judges and Internet voters selected the winner.

Fallen hero

MN ST. PAUL — A decorated Navy veteran who robbed a credit union and then hid in the Mississippi River in scuba gear was sentenced to 11 years in prison.

Mark W. Samples, 41, of Hager City, Wis., was convicted in May of stealing more than \$70,000 in the holdup. Witnesses said he fled on a mountain bike, then made his way to the river's edge, donned scuba gear and drifted downstream to his car.

Samples claimed at trial that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as the result of a 1987 Iraqi attack on the USS Stark that killed 37 sailors, including Samples' best friend.

Cemetery life extended

NM SANTA FE — Santa Fe National Cemetery is getting an aboveground burial vault, which will extend the life of the military cemetery until 2018. The cemetery opened part of its columbarium, a three-wall structure that eventually will have about 3,000 niches for cremated remains. The 81-acre cemetery had been expected to be at capacity as early as 2008.

Astronaut's son arrested

CA SAN FRANCISCO — The 54-year-old son of astronaut Walter Schirra was arrested at San Francisco International Airport on child sex charges as he tried to board a plane for Thailand, allegedly to solicit sex with underage boys, federal agents said.

Walter M. Schirra III of San Francisco, a property manager, was arrested. A search of his luggage revealed photos of shirtless Asian boys, sexual-performance prescription drugs, condoms and large amounts of candy, said Special Agent Catherine Miller of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

None of the seized items is illegal, but a search of a computer at Schirra's home revealed images of child pornography, Miller said.

Schirra is being held without bail pending a hearing.



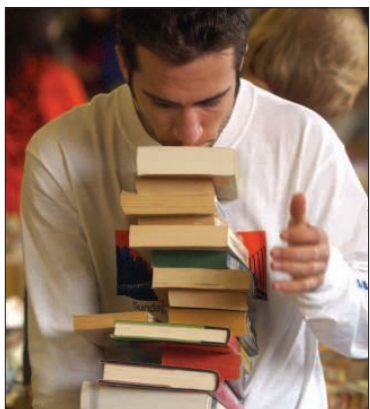
Time for a catnap

A Siberian tiger hangs its tongue out of its mouth during a yawn as it settles in for an afternoon nap at Lee Richardson Zoo in Garden City, Kan.



Ice princess

An early-morning skater graces the ice on the opening day of ice skating at the Crown Center Ice Terrace in Kansas City, Mo.



Book worm

Mark McCraw of Raleigh, N.C., tries to balance a tall stack of books he is intent on buying at the Wake County Public Libraries book sale.



Red River High School cheerleaders Jessica Pastir, left, and Nikki Elm perform toe-touch baskets during practice at the Red River Gym in Grand Forks, N.D.

Basket cases



Clean water activist Christopher Swain, 36, of Colchester, Vt., left, hugs his daughter Rowan Swain, 4, after completing an 81-mile swim down the Charles River. Swain made the swim to draw attention to water pollution.

Keeping warm



Potty on the go

Garrison Hale, sitting in the driver's seat, steers an outhouse while other members of the Q-92 team, Kathy Limberg, left, and Maynard Meyer push. Norsky Outhouse racing in downtown Madison, Minn., is part of the town's Norsefest.



Down on the bayou

Barely stirring the water, paddlers begin a four-day trip down Bayou Lafourche from Donaldsonville, La. The float was organized by the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program to raise awareness about the bayou.

Squirrel gets a good home

PA HARRISBURG — Nutkin the Squirrel can live out her later years hunting nuts indoors with a Pennsylvania couple, a court has ruled.

The gray squirrel, which was born in South Carolina where there are no rules against domesticating wild squirrels, may be kept by a Schuylkill County couple despite state laws that prohibit keeping wild animals as pets, a Superior Court panel ruled.

Nutkin's owner Barbara Gosselin was charged in 2002 with violating the ban on keeping wild animals after a game officer came across Nutkin while investigating a case of deer poaching.

Gosselin's conviction was overturned and the judges ordered that her \$100 fine and costs be returned.

Stomach full of surprises

CA SANTA CRUZ — A jail inmate allowed to attend a family funeral returned to the jailhouse 12 hours later with a stash of drugs and syringes in his stomach, authorities said.

Josiah Robertson, 30, had been in jail since Oct. 18 on charges of selling and transporting heroin and resisting arrest. Deputies suspected he may have planned a drug run when he asked to attend the funeral, police Sgt. Steve Carney said.

Laxatives and an enema were used and Robertson "gave them up within five hours," Carney said. Robertson expelled 17 grams of black tar heroin, 20 grams of marijuana and four hypodermic syringes.

Lead infections drop

ID KELLLOGG — The amount of lead detected in children who live between Mullan and Cataldo in northern Idaho is dropping, the state health department said. The blood-lead levels for children age 6 and younger nearly met the goal for the Coeur d'Alene Basin. Child blood-lead levels were once at emergency levels. But they dropped dramatically since the Parker Hill Smelter was closed in 1981 and the cleanup program for contaminated soil was developed.

War hero database

MO JEFFERSON CITY — More than 576,000 Missourians who served in the military from the territorial era through World War I are now listed in an Internet-accessible database hosted by the secretary of state's office. The database, which went online in time for Veterans Day, expands an online listing of World War I veterans, which debuted about two years ago. The new version includes information from 12 wars and military engagements, beginning with the War of 1812.

Cattle anthrax deaths

ND BISMARK — Fifteen beef cattle died from anthrax on a Dunn County farm last month and were burned and buried as a precaution, the state veterinarian says. Veterinarian Susan Keller said the Taylor-area farm is under quarantine, but the cattle deaths pose no threat to the public. Keller chose not to publicize the information last month to avoid an

unnecessary scare, she said.

Store owner arrested

TN RED BANK — The owner of a shaved ice business was arrested after two employees claimed he spanked them for making mistakes at work.

Paul Eugene Levensgood, 57, was charged with two counts of sexual battery after the 19-year-old women complained.

One of the women told police that on her first day at the Tasty Flavors Sno Biz, Levensgood made her sign a statement that said: "I give Gene permission to bust my behind any way he sees fit."

Police Sgt. Jay LaFrance said the women likely accepted the spankings instead of leaving immediately because they were "brought up to respect anybody who is an authority figure."

Levensgood was freed on \$2,000 bail pending a Nov. 16 court hearing. His franchise in this Chattanooga suburb was closed.

Nuclear dump dispute

NV LAS VEGAS — Opponents of a national nuclear waste dump in Nevada lost their chance to put an ally in the White House with President Bush's defeat of Democratic Sen. John Kerry.

Bush carried Nevada by 2 percentage points after facing heavy Democratic criticism that he reneged on a 2000 campaign pledge when he approved the plan to entomb 70,000 tons of the nation's most radioactive waste 90 miles from Las Vegas.

Kerry promised that Yucca Mountain would not open on his watch.

Nevada is pressing lawsuits, hoping to stop the government from moving highly radioactive waste from commercial and military sites in 39 states to Yucca Mountain beginning in 2010.

WTC park planned

NY NEW YORK — A small park festooned with sweet gum trees and pink azalea bushes will be built on the north end of the redeveloped World Trade Center, according to newly unveiled plans.

The tiny park, which will cover about a third of an acre at the intersection of Greenwich Street and West Broadway, will open late next year or in early 2006, developer Larry Silverstein said at a conference sponsored by Business for Social Responsibility.

It will also serve as a forecourt to the new 7 World Trade Center, a 52-story office tower that replaces a building destroyed in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The tower will open for business early next year.

Lawyer gets DUI charge

FL TAMPA — A prosecutor known for being "tough as nails" in drunken driving cases was charged with a DUI after police said they stopped her with three children in her car.

Lydia Dempsey Wardell, 37, was arrested near her home and was found to have a blood-alcohol level of 0.23 percent, nearly three times the legal limit in Florida for drivers, police said.

She was released on \$500 bail.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

A music student's dream

Conductor Seiji Ozawa, artistic director of the Vienna State Opera, will open a music academy overlooking Lake Geneva.



Ozawa

The daily Tribune de Geneve said Friday the academy will offer students the opportunity to perform chamber music with world-class professors.

Ozawa, who spent 29 years with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, hopes to attract the best young talent in Europe to the school in the village of Blonay, above Montreux.

Tuition will be free, the newspapers said. Ozawa hopes to admit 20 to the inaugural class next summer.

Costs for the school's debut season will total about \$212,000, to be funded

mainly by individual sponsors, private foundations and local authorities, the newspapers said.

Additions will take place in Geneva and Cologne, Germany, in coming months, they said.

Peaches on TV

Peaches Geldof, daughter of musician Bob Geldof, will make her television debut presenting a teen documentary.

Geldof, 15, whose middle name is Honeyblossom, will write and present the documentary, which will screen on British television next year, Sam Cash, managing director of production company Ten Alps, said Friday.

Peaches' younger sister Pixie, 14, has appeared as an interviewer on the satellite television program "It's a Girl Thing," while older sister, Fifi Trixibelle, 21, works as an intern on music channel MTV.

Cash said "Peaches Geldof — Inside the Mind of a Teenager" would be a distinctive British look at the struggles of being a teen. It's expected to air in March on satellite channel Sky One.

Harry sets up in South America

Prince Harry arrived in Argentina for a stay of several weeks to work on a polo horse farm before he's scheduled to join the British army next year.

The 20-year-old landed in Buenos Aires aboard a commercial flight Friday and was expected to spend most of his time at a working ranch in the Argentine countryside, local media reported.

The visit by Harry comes less than a month after he scuffled with a photographer outside a London nightclub.

The photographer, who suffered a cut lip, accused Harry of striking him without provocation in the Oct. 21 altercation. Royal officials said Harry was hit in the face with a camera and pushed back.

Martin picks up achievement award

Too much praise can turn Steve Martin into a wild and insincere guy.

The star of "The Jerk" and "Bringing Down the House" accepted the American Cinematheque career achievement honor Friday with mock cynicism.

The frequent "Saturday Night Live" guest host played aloof with friends in the audience that included Robin Williams, Jon Lovitz, Kevin Nealon, Martin Short, Dana Delany, Eugene Levy. "Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid" filmmaker Carl Reiner and "Parenthood" director Ron Howard.

"There are so many familiar faces tonight, people I've worked with, people I haven't seen in years and I just thought, 'Why can't we wear name tags? What would be so wrong?'" Martin joked.

"But this evening is especially meaningful to me," Martin added, "because when I was a kid my friends and I used to meet after school and get all dressed up and play 'American Cinematheque awards show.'"

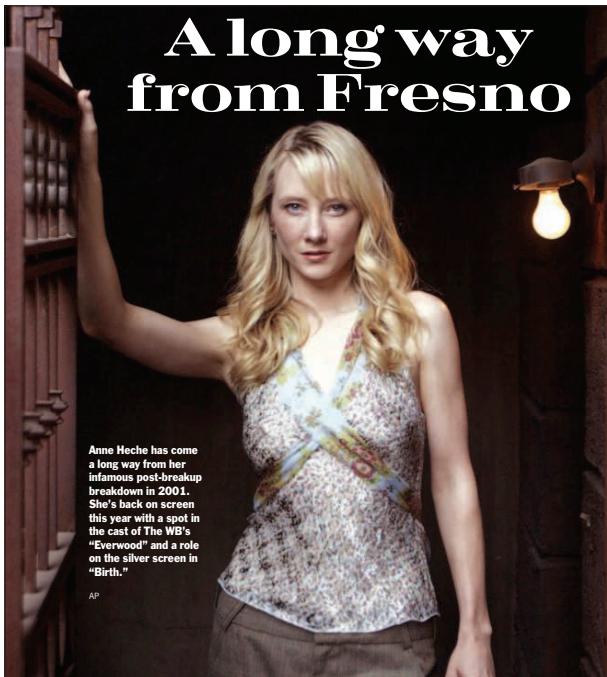
Rick Nicita, chairman of the organization's board, said they chose to honor Martin because he was a "Renaissance man" who has excelled not only as an actor and comedian but as a playwright, novelist, art collector — and even banjo player.



Martin

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

A long way from Fresno



Anne Heche has come a long way from her infamous post-breakup breakdown in 2001. She's back on screen this year with a spot in the cast of The WB's "Everwood" and a role on the silver screen in "Birth."

AP

Actress makes her way back on screen after infamous breakdown

BY MARIA ELENA FERNANDEZ

The Los Angeles Times

HOLLYWOOD

Four years ago, you could have called Anne Heche crazy.

Why not? That's what the tabloids took to calling her, and it's what she called herself. "Call Me Crazy" is the title of the 2001 memoir she wrote, she said, to purge herself of her childhood demons and split personality, the one that led her to abandon her car in Fresno, Calif., wearing shorts and a bra, the day after breaking up with Ellen DeGeneres. Then she wandered into a stranger's house, where she showered, put on Mickey Mouse slippers, and tried to persuade the children there to board a spaceship to heaven with her.

In the aftermath of her Fresno moment, Heche's once-promising career seemed to be reduced to a late-night TV punch line. So you'd be forgiven for doing a double-take at the sight of a sane-looking Heche in Armani, holding her husband's hand and looking calm and vibrant at this year's Emmys, nominated for her role in the Lifetime movie "Gracie's Choice." In the weeks ahead she'll be even more visible: she'll be appearing Monday nights on the WB, where she plays Amanda Hayes on "Everwood." She

also recently starred in the CBS movie "The Dead Will Tell." On the big screen, Heche is appearing in "Birth" with Nicole Kidman, released Oct. 29 in the States.

Could so much entertainment-industry money really have been gambled on an actress everyone, it seemed, agreed was out to lunch — who inspired the Los Angeles play "Call Us Crazy: The Anne Heche Monologues?"

Margot Kidder had her "Big Flip-Out," wandering the streets of L.A. for five years, and survived; Patty Duke went public with her manic depression in 1982 and thrived. But they had already established big careers.

Will Tinseltown be as compassionate with Heche as it was with them or with some of its most famous alcoholics, drug addicts and sexuals?

"For better or for worse, people always said that I chose life," the 35-year-old Heche said recently, relaxing with a vanilla latte at a coffeehouse near her penthouse apartment on Beverly Boulevard. "I have always chosen a path that was about finding the love of my life and finding a family. And now my focus can be on my work."

"It's a benefit that I did all those years because I have them to draw on as an actress. If you're looking for

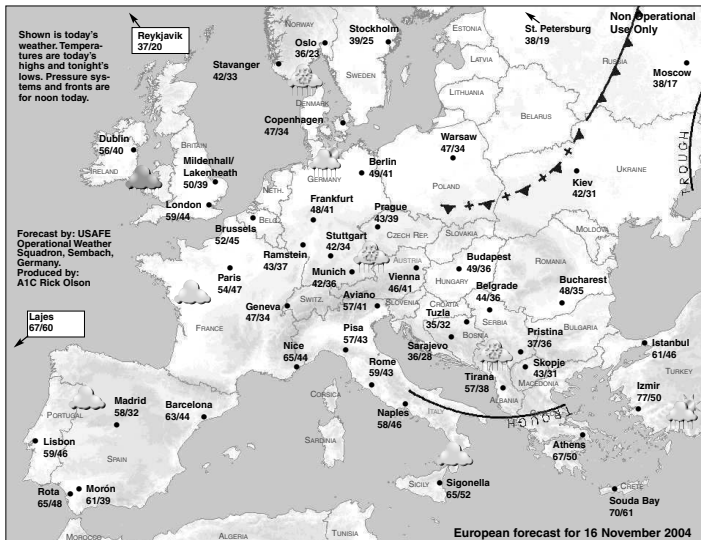
someone with a well to explore emotionally on the screen, I can do it. My challenge now is: Can I create and can I be as creative from a place of love?"

"It's funny, you get really happy in your life and you have nothing to talk about."

Until "Call Me Crazy" was published and she spilled her guts to Barbara Walters, no one knew the back story that explained her strange behavior that day: the sexual abuse she said she suffered as a young girl, which led her to block most of her childhood memories and fill them in with delusions of flying and being the reincarnation of God herself.

Now that time and distance has made all of that a bit hazy, Heche said, she finally can chase the career others always wished for her, but that she placed on the back burner in her desperate quest for love. Her "pre-Fresno" phase lasted 31 years. At 35, and her fourth year of "post-Fresno" serenity, Heche said she is poised to take on Hollywood again, big screen and small.

"It's taken me four years to create my family and feel solid," she said. "I never had a solid family. I didn't want anyone worrying about family love. Even though I've had an incredible, incredible career, and that is my passion, I gave my life to finding the love of my life. I risked everything for that."



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the lower 50s, Wednesday lows in the mid 40s.

Britain, Ireland: Cloudy with rain-showers. Highs in the mid-50s, Wednesday lows in the lower-40.

Croatia and Bosnia: Cloudy with rain/snow mix. Highs in the mid-30s, Wednesday lows in the upper 20s to lower 30s.

France: Partly to Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers to the north. Highs in the mid 50s to mid 60s, Wednesday lows in the mid 40s.

Northern Germany: Cloudy with rain-showers. Highs in the upper 40s, Wednesday lows in the lower-40s.

Southern Germany: Cloudy with rain showers. Snow in the higher elevations. Highs in the mid to lower 40s, Wednesday lows in the mid-30s.

Hungary: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the upper 40s, Wednesday lows in the mid-30s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid to 50s, Wednesday lows in the lower 40s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s to low 60s, Wednesday lows in the mid 40s to lower 50s.

Kosovo: Cloudy with rain/snow mix. Highs in the mid-30s, Wednesday lows in the mid 30s.

Norway: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain/snow showers. Highs in the mid 30s to low 40s, Wednesday lows in the lower 20s to lower 30s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper-50s to lower 60s, Wednesday lows in the lower 30s to mid 40s.

Turkey: Mostly cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the lower 60s to lower 80s, Wednesday lows in the mid 40s to lower 60s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at:
<https://ows.sembach.af.mil>
<http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil>

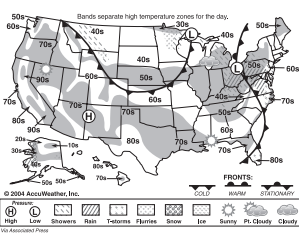
SUN & MOON

	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	6:34am	6:36am
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	7:39am	7:41am
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:01pm	5:00pm
Sunset (Frankfurt)	4:43pm	4:40pm



THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

[illegible]

Scheduled to **ETS** or **PCS**? Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS & STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

Horoscope

Make your deal now — it's done fair and square, and you don't have to worry about the backlash of biker's remorse or any such thing. The Capricorn moon does get to the point. And with the Scorpio sun rooting for us to clue into what people really want (the story behind the story), it's more likely we can fulfill both spoken and unspoken promises.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(November 16). This year, you've dropped the need to be jaded, so, at times, you'll feel naive and vulnerable. Life will unfold for you as if you're seeing it for the first time. Romance is part of what makes this possible. Someone special makes your heart sing in the next three months. Make decisions about work in February. Love signs are Capricorn and Gemini.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You cajole. You kid. You flatter and flirt. And still, you have no idea where you stand with that closed-off someone. Keep working on it. If anyone can melt through that layer of ancient ice, you can.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Sweeping changes dazzle you, but don't hang around slack-jawed for long. There's an opportunity in this, and you're just the one to take advantage of it! On a romantic note, be a bit more curious about a loved one's past.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You awake in a swingin' mood, like you've found your inner Austin Powers. Swanky sentiments get the attention of your target audience. Maybe you sing your message; maybe you dance it. However you do it, you do it with style.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). A juicy prize lands in your world, but unfortunately, everyone else wants it, too. It's like a soccer team for 5-year-olds. Everyone huddles around the ball instead of taking his or her position in the field. Your maturity prevails.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You act out of a sense of honor, because it's right, and because you're a noble person. So what if nobody notices

just yet? Don't worry! Someone will — without prompting from you. Tonight, it's up to you to live them things up.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You'll have a one-on-one audience with an exalted individual — not the opportunity to divulge your smarts. Keep things friendly and light. A sprightly air sign (Gemini, Libra or Aquarius) makes your heart beat like a tom-tom.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Who can work with the theatrics going on behind the scenes? It's all a con to stop planning your escape and focus on the proceedings. But focus you must if you're to get your share of the rewards.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It feels so fabulous to be liked and accepted! However, there's no reason to rush into any agreements or declare your passionate alliance with anyone. Take it easy! Keep your cards tucked into your chest.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A relationship tugs at you, trying to get your attention. So it's just not where you head is — does that make you a bad person? No, but you'll proud of yourself later if you stop and acknowledge what others need.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Real opportunity doesn't drop names and make big promises. It gives you a sly smile instead and opens the door just a crack so that you can see a silver of what's possible. Beware of people who are all show, no go.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're not backed into a corner. You're backed into a circle — a merry-go-round that's difficult to jump off. Love takes you for a whirl, making you feel both stilled and free all at once. At least contradiction makes things interesting.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're the healer of your environment. As much as you'd like to feel an automatic sense of belonging at work, the kinship has been deteriorating. You'll have to build it from scratch now, and you're the one who can.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis

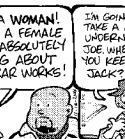


proceedings. But focus you must if you're to get your share of the rewards.

Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



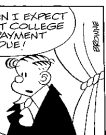
Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



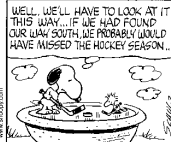
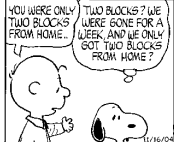
Red Rover



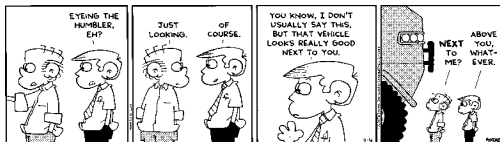
Better or Worse



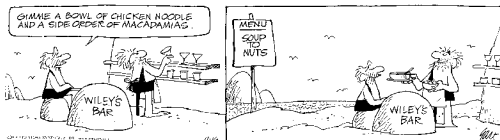
Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



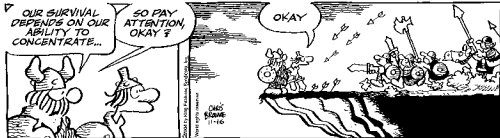
Blondie



Dilbert



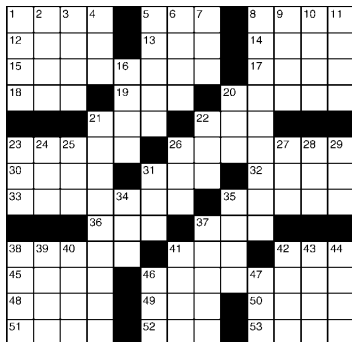
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Heavenly ring
- 5 Hired transport
- 9 Pesky insect
- 12 On the rocks
- 13 Big bother
- 14 "Clue" weapon
- 15 Winner of Super Bowls I and II
- 17 Square
- 18 Feminine pronoun
- 19 Intention
- 20 Banquet
- 21 Martini ingredient
- 22 Enjoyment
- 23 Medieval peasant
- 26 Theft
- 30 Unadulterated
- 31 Male or female
- 32 Chills and fever
- 33 Forgetfulness
- 35 Facade
- 36 Affirmative action
- 37 Tease
- 38 Noble's domain
- 41 Sprite
- 42 — out a living
- 45 Reverberate
- 46 "Basket Case" band
- 48 Winglike
- 49 "— was saying, ..."
- 50 Fairy-tale villain
- 51 Wild a needle
- 52 Nerd-pack occupant

Down

- 1 Exorbitant
- 2 Farm fraction
- 27 Id counterpart
- 3 Ogle
- 4 Praise in verse
- 5 With 7-Down, 1994 Chris Elliott movie
- 6 Leading man
- 7 See 5-Down
- 8 Alien's quest
- 9 Exploding star
- 10 Mimics
- 11 Bivouac structure
- 16 Apprehend
- 20 Bear hair
- 21 Tenderfoot
- 22 Send electronically
- 23 IRA employee
- 24 Drone
- 25 Grecian vessel
- 26 Actress Thompson
- 27 Id counterpart
- 28 Conventional
- 29 Nevertheless
- 31 Football Hall-of-Famer Luckman
- 34 Sauce source
- 35 Small flute
- 37 Comic Robert
- 38 Out of play
- 39 USC rival
- 40 Burn slightly
- 41 Gaelic
- 42 Advantage
- 43 "Family Feud" host Richard
- 44 Kept tabs on
- 46 Hiatus
- 47 Promptly

Answer to Previous Puzzle



11-16 CRYPTOQUIP

KYML CNC KWLFO YMS

FKBL ZNXU FN QNCM

BCCMOBWFMRX. UYM KNDRO

Q SX "NL FYM ONDZRM!"

Yesterday's Cryptquip: I SUPPOSE YOU MIGHT SAY THAT MOVIES STARRING ACTOR CHEVY HAVE MANY CHASE SCENES.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: C equals M

15 signs of abusive relationship

Dear Abby: In 1996, in memory of a 19-year-old battered woman who was murdered by her boyfriend, you printed an item requested by her family. It changed my life. On March 29 of that year, my dad said, "I have something for you," and handed me your column. It contained a list of 15 warning signs of a batterer. It was my wake-up call.

At first I thought, "How can this help ME?" Well, it did.

Few realize how important a role verbal abuse and criticism play in an abuser's efforts to gain control and keep you from leaving. The verbal abuse was harder for me to deal with than being kicked in the back when I'd walk away from one of his outbursts.

After reading that column, I finally understood there was nothing I could change that would make him love me. Thank you.

Grateful, Illinois

Dear Grateful: People often ask if I hear from readers letting me

know how columns affect them. Today I'll reprint that list in your honor.

(1) **PUSHES FOR QUICK INVOLVEMENT:** Comes on strong and pressures the new partner for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.

(2) **JALOUSY:** Excessively possessive; calls constantly or visits unexpectedly.

(3) **CONTROLLING:** Interrogates you intensely (especially if you're late) about whom you talked to and where you were.

(4) **UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:** Expects you to be the perfect mate.

(5) **ISOLATION:** Tries to cut you off from family and friends; accuses people who are your supporters of "causing trouble."

(6) **BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS OR MISTAKES:** It's always someone else's fault.

(7) **MAKES OTHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER FEELINGS:** The abuser says, "You

make me angry," instead of "I am angry."

(8) **HYPERSENSITIVITY:** Is easily insulted, claiming hurt feelings when actually mad.

(9) **CHILDRY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN:** Kills or punishes animals brutally.

(10) **"PLAYFUL" USE OF FORCE DURING SEX:** Enjoys throwing you down or holding you down against your will.

(11) **VERBAL ABUSE:** Constantly criticizes or says blatantly untrue things.

(12) **RIGID GENDER ROLES:** Expects you to serve, obey, remain at home.

(13) **SUDDEN MOOD SWINGS:** Switches from sweet to violent in minutes.

(14) **PAST BATTERING:** Admits to hitting a mate in the past.

(15) **THREATS OF VIOLENCE:** Says things like, "I'll break your neck," or "I'll kill you," and then dismisses them.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

Dear Abby



Know how columns affect them. Today I'll reprint that list in your honor.

(1) PUSHES FOR QUICK INVOLVEMENT: Comes on strong and pressures the new partner for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.

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(7) MAKES OTHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER FEELINGS: The abuser says, "You

Stand firm with sister's children

Dear Annie: My mother, my husband and I are co-raising my younger sister's two wonderful boys. My sister has many issues (drugs; being one of them) and only wants to be a mom when it is convenient. My mother wants to be a grandma but will not help discipline the kids.

Basically, she wants to be liked.

My husband and I adore the boys, but unfortunately, we are their only disciplinarians, and the boys tend to resent that. Also, we have a child of our own, and he adores his cousins, but we are afraid that he may start to act like them.

I've talked to my Mom about this, and she believes she is doing her part, but in a more relaxed manner. She allows the boys to ransack her home on a daily basis and believes that I'm too stern and impatient.

Annie's Mailbox



How do we resolve this without losing the boys to the dark side, and how can we get my mom on the same program?

— Arizona Auntie

Dear Auntie: Let your mother be a grandma. She isn't willing to be anything else, and there's no point in arguing endlessly. If your discipline methods are fair and consistent, ALL of the children will learn to respect you, and they will behave in your presence. The fact that they are testing your limits is normal, so make sure they know what those limits are. You have taken on an enormous responsibility, but you sound quite capable. We commend you for caring enough about your nephews to be the kind of parent they need. Please don't give up on them.

Dear Annie: My niece recently was married in a civil ceremony.

ny. Now she is planning a big wedding for next February. My son will be the best man, and my daughter is the maid of honor. My niece expects them to give a couple's shower as well as arrange the bachelor and bachelorette parties. This seems excessive to me. And isn't it deceptive to invite hundreds of guests to a wedding that already has taken place?

— Aunt in San Bernardino, Calif.

Dear Aunt: Many couples who have had civil ceremonies later have religious weddings and/or large receptions. It is also OK to have a couple's shower if there were no other showers. However, it's a bit late for bachelor and bachelorette parties, and we hope your children can talk the bride out of those.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to annies-mailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

WHASA

PEDYT

HYLOW

ATWIRE

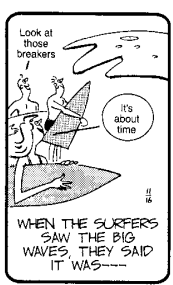
ANS:

Jumbles: SHYLY NOTCH PREACH MINGLE

Answer: When the scholars took a night flight their conversation was on a — HIGH "PLANE"

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrison



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

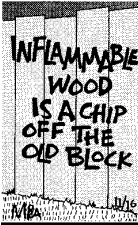
THE " " (Answers tomorrow)

Family Circus



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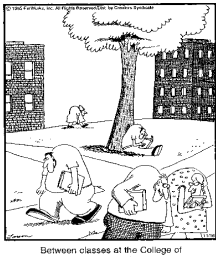
GRAFFITI



Dennis the Menace



The Far Side



Non Sequitur



Three-goal flurry lifts United



United goalkeeper Nick Rimando (18) celebrates with teammates after beating Kansas City in the MLS Cup on Sunday.

Eskandarian's goals turn MLS Cup

BY KEN PETERS

The Associated Press

CARSON, Calif. — Alecko Eskandarian sported a wide grin and had a big cigar clamped between his teeth.

"It's not lit," he said.

Asked about being spotted earlier with a cigar that was, he chuckled and said, "Yeah, but I didn't inhale."

Eskandarian had reason to be jovial. He scored twice in a 4-minute span in the first half to help D.C. United beat Kansas City 3-2 in the MLS Cup on Sunday.

"What a great year we had," said Eskandarian, a 22-year-old former University of Virginia star taken with the first pick in the 2003 MLS Draft.

"We had a meeting last night, and Earnie Stewart said that this group of guys will be on the field together for the last time. It was a great finish."

His team might have to expand the trophy case. In the nine years the MLS Cup has been contested, United has been in the final five times and won four.

The championship was the second for Peter Nowak. He was the MVP of Chicago's 1998 MLS Cup victory over United, and was on the winning side again this time as United's rookie coach.

He talked earlier about the disappointment of losing the 2002 game, when he and the Fire were defeated by the Wizards.

"I got my trophy back," Nowak said. "When you receive a trophy as a player or a coach, it's a satisfying feeling."

They [the players] make me look like a genius, all their hard work. I put them through hell, really worked them, but now they get to enjoy it."

United spotted the Wizards a goal in the sixth minute, then scored three times in a 7-minute span of the first half.

Eskandarian's goal in the 19th minute tied it 1-1, and he added his second goal 4 minutes later.

United built a two-goal lead on an own-goal when a pass by Stewart deflected off Wizards defender Alex Zlotinica and into the net in the 26th minute.

Kansas City closed to 3-2 on Josh Wolff's penalty kick in the 58th minute. The Wizards were awarded the kick when United's Denny Kovalenko, protecting the goal line, used his hand to knock a shot by Davy Arnaud over the bar.

Kovalenko was ejected, the first player sent off in the nine-year history of the Cup.

Despite being down a man, United held off the Wizards the rest of the way.

Kansas City's Bob Gansler, the Wizards' coach when they won the title four years ago, complimented United.

"To use an old bit of soccer wisdom, you play about as well as your opponent lets you," he said.

Freddy Adu, United's 15-year-old phenom, came on as a substitute in the 65th minute to a roar from the crowd of 25,797. He made a run down the side with the ball late in the game, but goalkeeper Bo Ostroski was able to pick it up before Adu could get off a shot.

Adu became the youngest member of a major pro championship team in the United States in modern sports history.

"Even if I wasn't going to get out there, I was going to cheer my heart

out on the bench," Adu said. "It's awesome."

After Jose Burciaga's curling 35-yard shot gave the Wizards the lead in the sixth minute, Eskandarian got United rolling.

"Even after their first goal, I never had any doubt we were going to win this game," Nowak said.

Eskandarian, whose father, Andriani, played for the Cosmos of the North American Soccer League, scored his first goal with a workmanlike individual effort. His second came after a Kansas City clearing pass bounced off his arm and toward the Wizards' goal.

Eskandarian, with the Wizards' Diego Gutierrez tight on him at the top of the box, controlled a pass from Brian Carroll, whirled around Gutierrez and boomed the ball into the net to draw United even.

He made it 2-1 when he came flying in — arm up — to deflect the ball as Jimmy Conrad tried to kick it downfield. As the ball rolled toward the goal, Eskandarian chased it down and then shot to the left as Ostroski went the other way.

The apparent handball went unnoticed by referee Michael Kennedy.

"I didn't even know where the ball hit me," Eskandarian said. "It was just what you learn in youth soccer — you keep going until you hear a whistle."

Gansler said of the no-call, "If the ref doesn't call it, then it's not a handball. I applaud United's opportunism."

The own-goal game when Stewart's hard cross bounced off Zlotinica, who was rushing back toward the goal.

San Jose has won the MLS Cup twice, the only team other than United with multiple championships.



Maria Sharapova reacts after winning a game against Anastasia Myskina during the semifinals of the WTA Tour Championships. She plays Serena Williams in the final.

Williams earns shot at revenge with Sharapova

BY BETH HARRIS

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Serena Williams pretended she couldn't remember playing Maria Sharapova in the Wimbledon final, amnesia being a convenient way of forgetting her one-sided loss.

"I don't know who it was," she said, half serious and half smiling. "I wasn't at Wimbledon this year."

The Russian trounced Williams 6-1, 6-4 for her first Grand Slam title at 17, a victory that propelled Sharapova to worldwide stardom and turned her blonde sex appeal into a lucrative off-court industry.

Williams won't be able to pretend Monday night, when she plays Sharapova in the final of the season-ending WTA Championships. The winner will receive \$1 million, and a car to donate to her favorite charity.

Williams won the tournament in 2001 and was second in 2002, while Sharapova is playing for the first time. Sharapova is ranked sixth, and Williams is eighth.

"She obviously is going to want her revenge," Sharapova said. "Hey, I'm in the finals of the championships, and I want it, too."

Williams will try to salvage a season that, by her definition, wasn't the best.

She won two titles, but no Grand Slams. She skipped the Australian Open while rehabilitating her knee, then had quarterfinal losses to Jennifer Capriati at both the French and U.S. Opens and lost Wimbledon after beating Amelie Mauresmo in a three-set semifinal.

On Sunday in the semifinals, Williams outlasted Mauresmo 4-6, 7-6 (2), 6-4, and Sharapova beat Anastasia Myskina 2-6, 6-2, 6-2 for the first time after losing to her countrywoman three other times this year.

Mauresmo's loss guaranteed Lindsay Davenport will retain the top spot when the year-end WTA rankings are released Tuesday. The Frenchwoman had to win the tournament to topple Davenport, who failed to advance to the semifinals. Davenport also ended the year No. 1 in 1998 and 2001.

Mauresmo failed to convert any of her 12 break points in the third set, when Williams hit winners on 10 of them.

"I felt like I forced her to play her best level and really make some passing shots and make some unbelievable saves," said Mauresmo, whose 11-match winning streak ended.

Mauresmo had six break points in the fourth game, but Williams held at 2-all. Williams outlasted Mauresmo in a 13-deuce, 32-point game to hold for a 5-3 lead.

"It was definitely intense," Williams said. "Amelie was playing some good shots and getting the balls back. Finally, I was able to just do it. It was really hard. She started coming to the net a bit more and she was taking some pace off the ball. Then I just decided to go for it."

Johnson sweep tightens Nextel Cup chase

Gordon, Earnhardt lose ground at Darlington

BY JENNA FRYER
The Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — Jeff Gordon was disgusted and Dale Earnhardt Jr. was disappointed. Emotions were running high after the Southern 500 on Sunday, with both Gordon and Earnhardt losing ground in the Nextel Cup championship.

They were a long way off from Jimmie Johnson, who used a season sweep at Darlington Raceway to pull within striking distance of his first title. Then there was Kurt Busch, who once again overcame every obstacle to retain his lead in the standings.

The result is the closest points race in NASCAR history heading into the season finale next weekend at Homestead-Miami Speedway.

Just 82 points separate Busch, the leader, from fifth-place Mark Martin.

"This is what we have now with the points structure, a playoff system where everybody is on edge, everybody has to make those split-second decisions and drive the same way," Busch said.

"There's no real template on what to do because this has never been done before."

The title is up for grabs among drivers so skilled that it's not a question of who will win it, rather who will lose it. Gordon thinks he came awfully close to giving up his chance Sunday.

He was the most dominant driver



at Darlington, leading three times for a race-high 155 laps. But a mistake in the pits cost him the victory. His car came down on an air hose, causing a delay that cost them the lead as they pulled it out from under a tire and continued on with the pit stop.

Gordon wound up third, and is third in the standings, 21 points behind Busch.

"Mistakes happen. I've made them, everybody makes them," he said. "But right now at this time in the game in this championship, that cost us a lot. I'm pretty disappointed."

He sounded pretty angry, too, especially when he said "extra pit practice" would be essential this week in preparation for the finale.

Earnhardt had his struggles, as well.

His battery went dead late in the race, and only a timely caution helped him avoid a disastrous finish. His crew had time to change the battery under caution, and he salvaged an 11th-place finish. But he lost ground in the Chase. He's fourth, 72 points back.

"That's too many, too many points," he said. "We'll go to

Homestead and, damn, try our best. But that's a lot of points for one race, especially the way Jimmie and Jeff ran at the test at Homestead, the way they always run, and the way they've run lately."

"We'll have to be lucky. Need to be good, too. It's hard to be both at the same time."

Busch has mastered that. He battled an ill-handling car throughout the race but still eked out a sixth-place finish.

But no one is in better position than Johnson, who went from ninth place and seemingly out of title contention six weeks ago to winning striking distance of his first championship.

He has won four of the past five races to slice his deficit from 247 to 10 to right on Busch's bumper.

Johnson has dedicated his season to the 10 people killed when a Hendrick Motorsports plane crashed Oct. 24 en route to the race at Martinsville Speedway.

"Fighting our way back in this championship with what took place with the airplane and Hendrick Motorsports, I just can't believe it," he said. "We have eight wins now in the season with everybody still healing from the loss over everybody on that airplane."

"That void inside of me just isn't filled, but this certainly helps. This is good medicine. We'll just keep rolling with it."

Johnson, who gave his crew credit for getting him to the lead late in the race with two fast pit



Jimmie Johnson, center, gives a high five to his crew as they celebrate winning the Mountain Dew Southern 500 on Sunday in Darlington, S.C. Johnson won both races held this season at Darlington, which will only host one Nextel Cup race a year from now on.

stops, had to overtake rookie Kasey Kahne and Jamie McMurray after they stayed out when the other leaders pitted for tires during the last of eight caution periods.

Johnson's Chevrolet beat Martin's Ford to the finish line to give him his second Darlington win this year.

The Southern 500, traditionally run on Labor Day weekend, was moved to November when NASCAR gave the holiday date to the newer, bigger California Speedway. Darlington, which hosts only about 60,000 spectators, will lose the second event to Texas Motor Speedway next year and will have only a race in May.

Busch enters finale clinging to narrow points lead

BY JENNA FRYER
The Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — Kurt Busch has spun out, blown an engine and raced a car that drove more like a bulldozer. No matter what the circumstances, none has been bad enough to cost him his points lead.

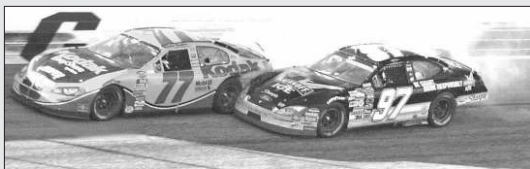
Busch battled an ill-handling car during the Southern 500 on Sunday, but still eked out a sixth-place finish. He left Darlington Raceway with his lead intact, and heads into next week's season finale with an 18-point advantage over Jimmie Johnson.

Four drivers are within striking distance of Busch, with 82 points separating first place through fifth.

"This is what we have now with the points structure, a playoff system where everybody is on edge, everybody has to make those split-second decisions and drive the same way," Busch said.

"There's no real template on what to do because this has never been done before."

If there's no template, then whatever plan Busch and his Roush Racing team are following should be the model for every team to use.



Kurt Busch (97) collides with Brendan Gaughan (77) during Sunday's NASCAR race in Darlington, S.C. Busch finished sixth and held onto his Nextel Cup points lead despite battling an ill-handling car all day.

Everything that could go wrong has gone wrong for Busch during NASCAR's new 10-race playoff format.

He spun out and nearly wrecked in Kansas, yet still finished sixth. He wrecked on the first lap at Charlotte, drove through oil and had to slide through the grass to avoid a catastrophic accident, yet still wound up fourth.

The engine on the No. 97 Ford blew up in Atlanta, and he ended up 42nd for his only finish outside the top 10 in a Chase race.

Last week he spun out twice at Phoenix, and seemed headed for

a miserable day at Darlington when the handling on his car went away shortly after the start of the race.

As the sun went down, Busch lost sight of the cars around him on the track and ran into Brendan Gaughan to cause fender damage.

Still, his crew worked hard all day to keep his car competitive and salvage his spot on top of the standings.

"That's what it takes for any team to win a championship — to prosper from a horrible day," Busch said. "We feel as if we dodged a bullet."

But there's still more work to do.

The points race between the top five drivers — Jeff Gordon is 21 back, Dale Earnhardt Jr. is 72 back and Mark Martin is 82 out — is the closest in the modern era. And the 18-point difference between Busch and Johnson is the third closest.

Car owner Jack Roush wants his driver to stay grounded.

"It's his to lose," Roush said. "I told everybody that we expect to win and hope to win, but we've got to prepare to lose and how we're going to deal with the frustration of having it all go upside-down after it's been so good for so long."

Qualifying to be revamped next season

The Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — A new post-qualifying procedure designed to save money and significantly alter racing weekends will begin next season in NASCAR.

Car owner Jack Roush said he and his crew chiefs were briefed on the measures Saturday at Darlington Raceway. NASCAR is expected to announce the plans this week.

Under the plan, qualifying would be moved from Friday to Saturday, then the cars would be impounded. They would then line up Sundays with no tire, gear or shock absorber changes.

NASCAR chairman Brian France said the plans are still under consideration. If implemented, France said "time is the cost they'll be helping teams save."

Roush said it was a "watershed" change for Nextel Cup. "I think it will save the teams money. I think it will result in at least as good if not more exciting racing and we'll look back at it after we've done it for a while like, 'Wow, why had we done it any other way,'" he said. "It's all good news."

Giants sign SS Vizquel to 3-year, \$12.25M deal

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Free agent shortstop Omar Vizquel has agreed to terms with the San Francisco Giants, the team announced Sunday.

Vizquel agreed to a \$12.25 million, three-year contract, a person close to the negotiations told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Vizquel, a nine-time Gold Glove winner, becomes the first of 207 free agents to join a new team, and the second to sign over after Texas reliever Doug Brocail returned to the Rangers on Friday on a \$1 million, one-year deal.

The 37-year-old Vizquel, one of baseball's best defensive shortstops and a switch-hitter, batted 291 (165-for-567) with seven homers and 59 RBIs last season for the Cleveland Indians. He also scored 82 runs, stole 19 bases and did not commit an error over the last 55 games.

Vizquel filed for free agency last month after the Indians declined to pick up his \$5 million option for 2005. Vizquel had said he wanted to return for a 12th season in Cleveland, where he grew into one of the franchise's most

Sports briefs

popular players, but the Indians said his return would be "a long shot." General manager Mark Shapiro's priority this offseason is pitching.

San Francisco signed Deivi Cruz, the Giants' primary shortstop last season, to an \$800,000, one-year contract earlier this month, but general manager Brian Sabean made it clear he was looking for a long-term solution in the position.

Daly-Donofrio cruises in LGPA's champions tournament

MOBILE, Ala. — Heather Daly-Donofrio cruised to a four-stroke win Sunday in the LGPA Tournament of Champions, securing a three-year exemption on the LGPA Tour.

Daly-Donofrio was supposed to be in the select field, but got in when tournament officials extended the eligibility criteria to include winners from 2001.

She shot a 70 to finish at 19-under 269. Laura Diaz birdied the last two holes to shoot 69 and finished second.

New York, four other cities submit bids for 2012 Games

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — The IOC received bids to host the 2012 Summer Olympics from London, Madrid, Moscow, New York and Paris.

Representatives from London and Madrid were at the International Olympic Committee's headquarters Monday to present their bids. The other three cities mailed their bids.

The host will be selected by the IOC in Singapore in July 2005.

Sooners still No. 2 in BCS Computers give Oklahoma edge over Auburn

BY RALPH D. RUSSO

The Associated Press

Oklahoma remained second in the Bowl Championship Series standings Monday, holding off Auburn because of a stronger computer ranking.

Southern California is still No. 1 with a grade of 9808.

Oklahoma's grade is 9621, and Auburn's is 9350.

Last week, the Sooners led the Tigers by .0567. Now, Oklahoma's lead is down to .0271.

The Tigers made up lots of ground on the Sooners in the polls on Sunday, tying Oklahoma for second in The Associated Press Top 25 and getting within two points of No. 2 in the coaches poll.

The polls each count for a third of a BCS grade. A compilation of six computer rankings makes up the other third, and according to the computers Oklahoma is the best team in the country.

USC is second in the computer rankings and Auburn is third.

The top two teams in the final BCS standings, which will be released Dec. 5, play for the national title in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 4.

The Trojans, Sooners and Tigers are all 10-0.

Bowl Championship Series standings

	AP	USC	ESPN	Computer	BCS	PTS
1. Southern Cal	1	1688	2995	1514	9628	2
2. Oklahoma	2	1536	2942	1435	9410	1
3. Auburn	3	1538	2942	1433	9357	3
4. California	4	1409	3671	4	830	8527
5. Tennessee	5	1381	3671	4	830	8540
6. Utah	6	1316	3698	9	789	8230
7. Illinois	7	1004	6178	1	993	8561
8. Boise St.	8	1004	6178	1	993	8561
9. Louisville	9	1046	6437	11	889	5770
10. Georgia	10	124	6228	9	948	6211
11. Michigan	11	834	5132	13	774	5075
12. Miami	12	834	5132	13	774	5075
13. Virginia Tech	13	731	4511	15	280	3863
14. Arizona St.	14	786	4837	14	771	5095
15. LSU	15	731	4511	15	280	3863
16. Tennessee	16	626	3952	17	519	3401
17. Iowa	17	626	3952	17	519	3401
18. Virginia	18	626	3952	17	519	3401
19. Texas A&M	19	274	1686	22	272	1784
20. Boston College	20	223	1372	23	229	1502
21. Stanford	21	223	1372	23	229	1502
22. West Virginia	22	330	2576	24	456	2748
23. UTEP	24	152	3093	25	87	9570
24. Bowling Green	25	42	9258	24	117	9767

The BCS Average is calculated by averaging the percent totals of the Associated Press, USA Today/ESPN Scores and Computer polls.

Auburn surged on the heels of its 24-6 victory over Southeastern Conference rival Georgia on Saturday. Oklahoma beat Nebraska 30-3, but appeared to be hurt in the polls by recent close calls against Oklahoma State and Texas A&M. The computers, however, have been partial to the Sooners' quality wins away from home in the Big 12 and strength of schedule.

California (.8522) is fourth,

Texas (.8140) is fifth and Utah (.8062) is back in the sixth spot, after slipping to seventh last week.

The unbeaten Utes are trying to become the first team from a mid-major conference to earn a BCS bid. They can lock up a spot by finishing in the top six. Utah is .0568 ahead of seventh-place Michigan, which will play against Mountain West Conference rival BYU on Saturday.

System not built for three unbeaten

BY RALPH D. RUSSO

The Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. — Auburn made its case on the field — and off — and enough voters were swayed.

The Tigers moved up to No. 2 in The Associated Press Top 25 on Sunday, but they're not alone. Auburn and Oklahoma now share the spot behind No. 1 Southern California in the media poll.

And they're only separated in the coaches poll by two points, with the Sooners holding the slim advantage.

Oklahoma's lead in the Bowl Championship Series standings shrank, too, as Auburn closed the gap from .0567 to .0271. The annual debate about the BCS is about to reach a fever pitch.

With three weekends of football left before the postseason matchups are determined, the chances of three major conference teams finishing unbeaten is a distinct possibility.

USC will play in the Orange Bowl for the BCS title on Jan. 4 with little protest if it wins its remaining two games.

As for the Tigers and Sooners, with two wins each, one will be on the way to Miami while the other is left to wonder why a 12-0 record and a major conference championship wasn't good enough.

This much is clear: If USC, Oklahoma and Auburn all run the table, a system deserving a shot at the national championship isn't going to get it. Nice job, BCS.

Auburn and Oklahoma each received 1,536 points in the latest AP poll. The Tigers got six first-place votes and the Sooners received eight. Last week, Oklahoma led Auburn by 43 and had 10 first-place votes to the Tigers' three.

Auburn made a convincing case Saturday against Georgia, beating the Bulldogs 24-6. It was Auburn's ninth victory of the season by at least two touch-downs.

"I haven't talked much about the BCS until this point," Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville said Saturday. "We had to get over this hump because of how good the team [Georgia] is."

Now, Tuberville is ready to talk about the BCS. He made those comments not at the postgame news conference, but during an impromptu post-

game news conference in the pressbox at Jordan-Hare Stadium. Tuberville admittedly dropped by to do a little lobby.

Who knows whether it helped? It's doubtful that he could have said anything that was more persuasive than his team's stellar performance.

The Sooners beat Nebraska 30-3 on Saturday night, but it was their close calls the previous two weeks against Oklahoma State and Texas A&M that led the voters questioning Oklahoma's credentials.

The Sooners beat the Cowboys by three and the Aggies by seven, playing poor defense in each game. Despite the struggles, Oklahoma's resume stacks up well with Auburn's. Both are 10-0 with three victories against ranked opponents.

The Tigers have been winning more decisively, by an average of 25 points. The Sooners' average margin is 16.8, but so far they've played a tougher schedule.

The Tigers' nonconference slate served up three cupcakes — Louisiana-Monroe, The Citadel and Louisiana Tech.

Oklahoma's nonconference schedule at least offered a couple of solid teams in Bowling Green and Oregon to along with pushover Houston State.

"Strength of schedule is important, but it's also how you're playing," Tuberville said. "It's not like we've been winning by two or three points. We've been pretty much running our score."

To Oklahoma's credit, its recent tight games came on the road against ranked Big 12 teams. And the Sooners' 12-0 win over Texas came on a neutral field.

Auburn goes on the road Saturday to face Alabama before a likely rematch with Tennessee in the SEC title game in Atlanta on Dec. 4.

Win those two and the Tigers won't have to answer any questions about their schedule strength. Oklahoma's remaining schedule is easier with Baylor and the Big 12 title game in Kansas City on Dec. 4 against one of weeklings from the North division, which doesn't bode well for the Sooners if Auburn wins out.

Or the BCS, which is all its tweaks and revisions is again on its way to solving nothing.

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Steelers land knockout blow vs. Browns

By TOM WITHERS

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The pregame fight might have been a draw. The main event was a knockout.

Starting in warmups, the Pittsburgh Steelers landed every punch.

Behind their unbeaten quarterback who refuses to play like a rookie, the Steelers rolled to their seventh straight victory, beating the Cleveland Browns 24-10 on Sunday.

The Steelers (8-1) did it the only way they know how. They pounded Jerome Bettis up the middle. They blitzed Browns quarterback Jeff Garcia relentlessly. They protected Ben Roethlisberger, and they didn't suffer a letdown.

"This team is special," said Bettis, who had two short touchdown runs.

Unfazed by Gerard Warren's pregame threats or anything Cleveland's defense threw at him, Roethlisberger became the first rookie quarterback to begin 7-0 since the 1970 merger.

"Ben doesn't get rattled," receiver Hines Ward said. "For him (Warren) to make comments like that wasn't very smart. Maybe he's jealous of Ben."

The Steelers, with their best record since the 1978 team reached 9-1, took smashmouth football to a new extreme.

During pregame warmups, Pittsburgh linebacker Joey Porter punched Browns running back William Green, bloodying his lower lip during their fight. Both were ejected before the opening kickoff.

After handing New England and Philadelphia their first losses the past two weeks, Pittsburgh could have gotten caught overlooking the Browns. No chance.



Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Roethlisberger (17) throws a pass from behind the block of Keydrick Vincent (68) in the second quarter of the Steelers' 24-10 win over Cleveland.

The Steelers remain the NFL's hottest team.

"We haven't done anything yet," coach Bill Cowher said. "We're fighting and scratching for everything we can get every week. We're not that much better than that team over there."

Bettis, starting for the second straight week in place of injured Duce Staley,

gained 103 yards on 29 carries, scoring from the 5 and 1 in the first half.

"That's my job, what I'm here for is to be a relief pitcher," Bettis said. "The guys to be the starters have to help. That happened, James Harrison had a real good game."

Harrison filled in for Porter, who exchanged pits and fists with Green during

their pregame bout. Harrison had six tackles and one of Pittsburgh's four sacks of Garcia.

On the final sack, Steelers safety Russell Stuvarts returned Garcia's fumble 24 yards for a TD.

The 104th game in the NFL's fiercest rivalry was particularly nasty — before-hand.

Earlier in the week, Warren promised to go after Roethlisberger's head, saying: "Kill the head and the body is dead." Warren was warned by the league on Friday to watch himself or risk a suspension.

Warren, who had one tackle, spoke with Roethlisberger before the game and explained his comments.

"They were private words not to be repeated," Warren said.

Roethlisberger said Warren was respectful.

"I thought a little bit, we laughed," Roethlisberger said. "He said, 'Let's play football, forget about what was said and enjoy today.' That was OK with me."

Roethlisberger wasn't spectacular, just an efficient 10-for-16 for 134 yards. He also had 41 yards rushing as he smartly avoided pressure by running from the Browns (3-6).

Roethlisberger gained 13 yards on a key third-and-1 late in the third quarter, finishing a handoff and running left behind a nice block from receiver Plaxico Burress for a first down.

"I told you the kid was good," Warren said.

Meanwhile, the Browns are in disarray. They've lost three in a row and there is growing speculation that coach Butch Darby's job is in serious jeopardy.

"I'm more concerned about the 53 guys in that locker room, of them remaining respectful and playing well. That's my biggest concern," said Davis, 24-35 since 2001 and 1-8 vs. Pittsburgh.

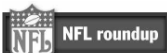
Manning, Colts get unexpected help from defense

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Peyton Manning threw five touchdown passes for the third time this season and had 320 yards, pacing the Indianapolis Colts to a 49-14 thrashing of the Houston Texans on Sunday.

Indianapolis (6-3) retained its share of the AFC South lead with Jacksonville with a surprisingly staunch defense. Robert Mathis had three sacks and forced three fumbles and the Colts finished with a season-high five sacks. They also returned a fumble and an interception for touchdowns.

Houston dropped to 4-5.



Falcons 24, Buccaneers 14: At Atlanta, Alge Crumpler caught a 49-yard TD pass from Michael Vick to clinch the victory for the Falcons (7-2).

Crumpler had four catches for a career-best 118 yards, and the Falcons rushed for 205 yards. Atlanta also had a season-high seven sacks, with Matt Stewart and Rod Coleman each getting two. The Bucs are 3-6.

Rams 23, Seahawks 12: At St.

Louis, the Rams tied Seattle atop the NFC West at 5-4, holding the Seahawks to three field goals in five trips inside the 20.

St. Louis' Marshall Faulk had a season-best 139 yards on 18 carries.

Seattle's Shaun Alexander ran for 176 yards, giving him 531 yards in the last three games and putting him over 1,000 yards for the fourth straight season. But Alexander's fumble after a 35-yard gain to the St. Louis 9 early in the fourth quarter blew the Seahawks' chance to tie it.

Saints 27, Chiefs 20: At New Orleans, Aaron Brooks threw a 42-yard touchdown pass to Joe

Horn midway through the fourth quarter for the Saints (4-5).

Horn had five catches for 167 yards, and Deuce McAllister ran for 127 yards and a touchdown. Derrick Blaylock, playing for the injured Priest Holmes, had 33 carries for 186 yards and a touchdown on the Chiefs (3-6).

Panthers 37, 49ers 27: At San Francisco, Muhsin Muhammad caught three touchdowns passes from Jake Delhomme in the second half as Carolina (2-7) snapped a six-game slide.

Punter Todd Sauerbrun made the go-ahead 34-yard field goal after regular kicker John Kasay injured his calf. Delhomme was

19-of-34 for 303 yards — 123 on six passes to Muhammad. San Francisco is 1-8.

Cardinals 17, Giants 14: At Phoenix, Emmitt Smith ran for two TDs and Arizona (4-5) sacked Kurt Warner six times, including four by Bertrand Berry.

Smith rushed for 67 yards, passing 18,000 yards in his career.

After opening 4-1, the Giants are 5-4.

Bengals 17, Redskins 10: At Landover, Md., Rudi Johnson ran for 102 yards on 31 carries to help the Bengals (4-5) snap a six-game road losing streak. The Redskins dropped to 3-6.

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Feeley in, Fiedler out in Miami

The Associated Press

DAVIE, Fla. — Miami Dolphins interim coach Jim Bates has made his first big decision: He's switching quarterbacks.

A.J. Feeley will replace Jay Fiedler as the starter Sunday at Seattle, Bates said Monday. It's Miami's most significant lineup change in the wake of coach Dave Wannstedt's resignation last week.

Wannstedt drew criticism for his loyalty to the older, more experienced Fiedler. Excluding two games early this season, Fiedler has been the No. 1 quarterback since 2000.

"It's time for A.J. to get an opportunity and see what he can do," Bates said. "He's ready to play for us, and ready to play well."

Feeley replaced Fiedler midway through the season opener, started the second and third games, then returned to the bench. He has thrown six interceptions, with three returned for scores, and just two touchdowns.

With the Dolphins (1-8) facing numerous offseason decisions, playing Feeley provides a chance to gauge his potential.

Ravens make most of turnover

Reed intercepts halfback pass, Baltimore gets on to beat Jets

BY ANDREA ADELSON
The Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Ed Reed made another big play when he had to, though he should probably send a thank-you note to LaMont Jordan.

Reed had a momentum-changing interception in the end zone off a halfback option pass from Jordan late in the second quarter, helping the Baltimore Ravens get back into a game they were in danger of being blown out of by the New York Jets.

Kyle Boller turned the interception into points, then keyed a rally that ended when Matt Stover kicked a 42-yard field goal over time to give the Ravens a 10-17 victory Sunday over the suddenly free-falling Jets.

With Baltimore down 14-0 late in the second quarter, Reed looked on in bewilderment as Jordan attempted to throw the pass through heavy traffic. Jordan was trying to toss the ball away but instead it went 4 yards deep into the end zone.

Reed took it and went 104 yards for a score, but it was called back on a holding penalty. A week ago in a 27-13 victory over Cleveland, Reed intercepted a Cleveland 106-yard interception return for a touchdown.

Although Reed's score was called back, Boller threw a 6-yard TD pass to Clarence Moore to get the Ravens (6-3) to 14-7 just before the break.

"I didn't expect it because they were all bunched up and I didn't



Baltimore's Clarence Moore catches a 6-yard TD pass from Kyle Boller in the second quarter of Sunday's 20-17 defeat of the New York Jets.

see anyone open," Reed said. "There were a lot of players in the end. It was a chance they took."

A chance Jets coach Herman Edwards must regret. The Jets (6-3) have lost two straight and three of four, and this defeat could end up hurting them in the wild-card race. It also could send them spiraling out of playoff contention.

The call from usually conservative offensive coordinator Paul Hackett seemed completely out of place. Curtis Martin scored twice on runs to give the Jets the two-touchdown lead. Quincy Carter, filling in for the injured Chad Pennington, made no mistakes up to that point.

But when Hackett sent down the play for Jordan, Edwards did not veto it. Instead, he watched as

Jordan was mobbed and failed to either be tackled for a loss or throw the ball away.

"We ran the play, thought it might work, and though we maybe would get up 21 on them," Edwards said. "The worst thing that could have happened, happened. We threw an interception."

Jordan took the blame.

"I automatically said that this game is on my shoulders," he said. "That play definitely was the turning point in the game. We are up 14-0, we just had a big play, and we are going in to score, then I threw an interception. They get the momentum and we just never got the momentum back."

Carter was awful in the second half, along the rest of his teammates on offense. After going 8-for-8 for 132 yards in the first half, Carter was 5-for-14 for 43 yards after the break. After racking up 209 first-half yards, the Jets had 96 the rest of the way. Martin ended with 119 yards on 28 carries.

Meanwhile, Baltimore played its way back into the game.

Stover kicked a 24-yard field goal to make it 14-10 and Boller threw a 16-yard TD pass to Clarence Moore with 4:13 remaining to go up 17-14.

The Jets tied it on Doug Brien's 20-yard field goal with 5 seconds to go in regulation after another mistake cost them a chance at a win. On third-and-goal from the 3 following an incomplete pass, the Jets wasted their final minute with 8 seconds remaining because Carter broke the huddle too late and there was little chance they could get the play off in time.

In overtime, the Jets went three and out twice before Baltimore's final drive for the winning score. Boller finished 19-for-33 for 213 yards with two interceptions.

Bears OT safety tops Tennessee

BY TERESA WALKER
The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Craig Krenzel knows who deserves credit for the Chicago Bears' latest victory.

"Our defense is playing as well, if not better, than any defense in the league," the quarterback said. "They came through big again for us."

That is an understatement.

Alex Brown sacked backup Billy Volek in the end zone and knocked the ball loose, and Adele Ogunleye touched down Titans tackle Fred Miller after he covered up the fumble, giving the Bears a safety and a 19-17 overtime victory over Tennessee on Sunday. The Bears' defense also scored a touchdown.

It was only the second NFL game to end on a safety in overtime. The other was Nov. 5, 1989, when Minnesota beat the Los Angeles Rams 23-21 by blocking a punt through the end zone.

The Bears (4-5) have won three straight for the first time since the end of the 2001 season, the last year they reached the playoffs.

This victory, combined with Green Bay's victory over Minnesota, has Chicago tied with Detroit a game back in the NFC North.

"It's tough getting in on the road like this, but this team each week keeps getting a little bit better," first-year coach Louis Little said.

Chicago didn't match the seven sacks and five turnovers forced in last week's victory over the New York Giants, but the Bears' timing couldn't have been better on its third sack. The Bears allowed the Titans 390 yards of offense, but forced three turnovers.

"We believe that if it comes down to us, we can win," Brown said. "We don't feel that a team can drive the ball down the field on us."

The Titans (3-6) came in needing a victory to keep alive faint playoff hopes before starting a three-game road trip through the AFC South. The defense responded with five sacks and three turnovers and just 176 yards allowed.

The outcome left the Titans defenders wondering what else they could have done.

"It is just inexcusable to lose at home against Chicago with them starting a rookie quarterback," cornerback Sammie Rolle said.

Well, Krenzel did beat the Titans. But he did come through late in regulation, going 4-for-7 for 65 yards to set up Paul Edinger's 29-yard field goal that tied the game 17-17 with 52 seconds left.

The offense provided points only on the field goal. Krenzel finished 16-for-28 for 116 yards.

Michael Haynes tipped an interception to himself and returned it 45 yards for a TD at the end of the first half to tie the game 7-7, and Ed McCaffrey beat the Titans 75 yards early in the third quarter for a 14-7 Chicago lead.

Anemic run defense again dooms Lions

BY MARK LONG
The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The Detroit Lions won't have to spend much time analyzing their three-game losing streak.

They know exactly what went wrong: they didn't stop the run.

Fred Taylor ran for a season-high 144 yards, David Garrard threw two touchdowns passes in his second career start and the Jacksonville Jaguars beat the Lions 23-17 in overtime Sunday.

"Everyone needs to demand better of themselves, and I'll just leave it at that right there," Detroit guard Damien Woody said.

Eddie Drummond's two punt returns for touchdowns in the fourth quarter sent the game into overtime, but Detroit's inability to stop the run could have resulted in a rout.

The Lions (4-5) allowed a season-high 239 yards on the ground. "When we've got teams like that down, we've got to step on their necks," Taylor said. "We

should have blown that team out."

The Jags (6-3) led 17-0 in the fourth, but Drummond's second touchdown evened the score with 46 seconds remaining.

Garrard and Jimmy Smith did the most damage in overtime. They hooked up three times for 69 yards on the winning drive, capping it with a 36-yard scoring play in which Smith beat cornerback Dre' Bly on a simple down-and-in pattern.

Smith finished with seven catches for 109 yards and passed James Lofton for 12th on the NFL's career receptions list with 767.

Garrard, meanwhile, proved he's more than just a career backup or a scrambling quarterback. "It feels like a dream right now," Garrard said. "I'm still living in the moment. I can't put my thoughts together right now, but it feels good. I hope it's just one more step for me on my quarterbacking resume."

Garrard finished 19-for-36 for

198 yards. He also had 42 yards rushing, adding to Detroit's run-stopping woes.

Washington ran for 156 yards last week against the Lions, and Dallas had 127 the week before.

Taylor gashed them again Sunday, finding open space off tackle all afternoon. He sat out much of the third quarter with leg cramps, but the backups picked up the slack. LaBrandon Toefield gained 41 yards, and rookie Greg Jones added 12 yards and a touchdown.

"We've just got to find a way to make those five or six plays that make such a difference in every game," Lions coach Steve Mariucci said. "We haven't been making those as often as we need to."

Offensively, the Lions were equally ineffectual.

Rookie Kevin Jones got all the carries for the first time this season and gained a tough 81 yards. But he was the lone bright spot.

Joey Harrington was sacked twice and was pressured on nearly every passing play. He finished 11-for-33 for 121 yards with an in-

terception and had his streak of games with at least one TD pass snapped at eight.

He had a handful of dropped balls and a few penalties that negated big plays, but he said no one could pose more problems than anything else.

"It was a combination of everything," said Harrington, whose team was just 2-for-14 on third down. "We started out in too many holes, and the blame is all across the board."

Harrington also didn't get much help from his depleted receiving corps. Rookie Roy Williams, slowed by the ankle he sprained last month against Atlanta, finished with two catches for 69 yards.

Az-Zahir Hakim, starting in place of injured Tai Streets, left the game in the first half with a bad injury and did not return.

"It's my responsibility to find out what our offense can do to be productive and score some points and to be better than we are," Mariucci said. "We've got to find a way to do that."

Fans give all-around effort

WR Brown fills in at CB, intercepts Bledsoe in win vs. Bills

BY JIMMY GOLEN

The Associated Press

FOXBORO, Mass. — Troy Brown had to make a lot of adjustments while playing both sides of the football.

One thing remains the same.

"You always want to score when you get the ball — offense or defense," he said Sunday night after his first career interception — one of four Patriots interceptions in a 29-6 victory over the Buffalo Bills.

Brown intercepted old friend Drew Bledsoe early in the fourth quarter and ran it back 17 yards to the Buffalo 23 before he was caught from behind. Bledsoe connected with Brown for 12 touchdowns and more than 200 passes during their time together with the Patriots, but this is the first time only one of them was happy after the catch.

"That's my man, I won't disrespect him in any way," said Brown, who had the ball from his interception stowed away in his locker after the game. "I would like to see him do well. But I do not want to see him come in here and beat us."

A wide receiver helping out on defense because of injuries in the secondary, Brown caught two passes for 23 yards, the first time in franchise history that a player has had a reception and interception in the same game.

"He's awesome," quarterback Tom Brady, who was 19-for-35 for 233 yards and two touchdowns. "Whatever the coach asks him to do, he does. The interception was awesome."

Adam Vinatieri kicked five field goals, and Corey Dillon ran for 151 yards on 26 carries. Bledsoe threw three interceptions and backup J.P. Losman had one and a fumble against a dominating New England defense.

Bledsoe was just 8-for-19 for 76 yards in all — a quarterback rating of 14.3 in his latest return to Foxboro, where he was the starter for eight seasons before losing his job to Brady in 2001.

The Patriots (8-1) have won two straight since their NFL-best 21-game winning streak ended on Oct. 31 at Pittsburgh. They outgained the Bills 428 yards to 125 and moved two games ahead of the New York Jets in the AFC East.

The Patriots led 20-0 at halftime, scoring on four of their five possessions, while Buffalo (3-6) punted three times and was intercepted twice. The Bills scored only on a punt return — a poor follow-up to their strong 22-7 victory over the Jets.

Even Willis McGahee, who sparked the Bills to three victories in their previous four games, couldn't do much after New England took an early lead. McGahee ran for more than 100 yards in those victories, his only previous pro starts, but was held to 37 yards on 14 carries by the Patriots.

Without any help from the running game, Bledsoe was his usual inept self — 8-for-19 for 76 yards — against his former team, dropping



New England Patriots WR David Givens (87) reaches but can't make the reception as Buffalo Bills' Terrence McGee (24) defends Sunday night in Foxboro, Mass. The Patriots won 29-6.

to 1-5 against the Patriots.

"Not only us," said safety Lawyer Milloy, another former Patriot, "but there are 31 other teams that should be envious of the way they're playing. They have only one loss this year and everyone who plays them has to be ready."

The Patriots, still rolling after last week's 40-22 victory at St. Louis, took a 6-0 lead on field goals of 27 and 24 yards by Vinatieri. On their next series, they marched 75 yards on 11

plays, capped by Brady's 13-yard pass to David Patten.

Bledsoe threw his second interception on the next possession. It was returned 29 yards by Teddy Bruschi, and Brady threw a 3-yard touchdown pass to Christian Fauria.

Vinatieri made it 23-0 with a 20-yard field goal in the third quarter. Jonathan Smith then returned Josh Miller's punt 70 yards for a touchdown, but the 2-point conversion attempt failed for Buffalo.

Packers: Late Minnesota comeback falls short

PACKERS, FROM BACK PAGE

The Vikings were stunned by the referee's ruling.

"We thought we had the ball and I don't know what else to tell you," Minnesota coach Mike Tice said. "We thought we had the ball from the get-go. We had a player with the ball, another player on top of him."

Ferguson broke into the open at midfield and thought he had a clear shot at the end zone when Antoine Winfield swooped in and punched the ball away.

"It seemed like the game was gradually slipping out of our hands and going into their grasp," Favre said. "When we broke it right there I said, 'Oh, boy.' You would think you'd been, 'Oh, great.' But until he got on the ground I was not satisfied."

Favre and Daunte Culpepper each threw four touchdown passes without an interception. It was Favre's 18th game with four or more TD tosses, second only to Dan Marino's 21.

Favre hit receiver Jason Walker, tailback Tony Fisher, tight end Bubba Franks and fullback William Henderson in the end zone as the Packers built a 31-17 lead.

"I knew it wasn't enough," Favre said.

Not with Culpepper on the other sideline.

Even though he was working without star receiver Randy Moss (strained hamstring) for the second straight game, Culpepper threw for 363 yards, connecting with Nate Burleson 11 times for 141 yards and a score.

Culpepper's 2-yard short pass to Antonio Smith with 2:53 left made it 31-24. The Vikings held and got the ball back with 2:18 remaining. Culpepper needed just three plays and less than a minute to move Minnesota 58 yards to a 17-yard TD toss to Mo Williams with 1:20 left.

That's when Ferguson fumbled and Stene snatched the ball back.

"It definitely was a little extra special to get out against my old team," Stene said. "I was just in the right place at the right time."

For payback.

Sunday's NFL stars:

Quarterbacks

■ Peyton Manning, Colts, shored Houston for 320 yards and five touchdowns, tying NFL record with his 40th game this season with five TD passes. **Victor** Daunte Culpepper set the record after this season.

■ Ben Roethlisberger, Steelers, became the first rookie QB to begin 7-0 since NFL merger in 1970 with a 24-10 win at Cleveland.

■ **David Garrard, Jaguars**, had two TD passes in his second career start, including a game-winning 35-yarder to Jimmy Smith in overtime in a 23-17 victory over Detroit.

■ Daunte Culpepper, Vikings, completed 27 of 44 passes for 363 yards and four TDs. But Brett Favre, Packers, went 26-of-39 for 239 yards and four TDs as Green Bay won 34-31.

Receivers

■ Brandon Stokely, Colts, had five receptions for 122 yards, and teammate Dallas Clark caught three passes for 102 yards in a 42-6 rout of Houston.

■ The Saints' Joe Horn had five catches for 169 yards, including a decisive 42-yard TD reception, in a 27-20 victory against Kansas City.

■ Isaac Bruce, Rams, had seven catches for 100 yards and the season's 100-yard game of the season.

■ The Falcons' Alge Crumpler had a career-best 118 yards, including a key 49-yard TD catch, as Atlanta defeated Tampa Bay 24-14.

■ The Panthers' Mushi Muhammad caught three touchdowns and had 123 yards receiving as Carolina beat San Francisco 37-21.

■ Nate Burleson, Vikings, caught 11 passes for 141 yards and a score.

Running backs

■ Emmitt Smith, Cardinals, ran for two TDs in a game for the first time in two seasons, leading Arizona past the Giants 17-14.

■ Derrick Baylock, Chiefs, subsided for injured Priest Holmes, ran for 186 yards and a touchdown under New Orleans.

■ Shaun Alexander, Seahawks, had 176 yards, going over 1,000 yards for fourth straight season, but Seattle lost at St. Louis 23-12. Marshall Faulk, Rams, had a season-best 139 yards on 18 carries.

■ Adrian Green, Packers, rushed for 145 yards in 21 carries in a 34-31 win over Minnesota.

■ Fred Taylor, Jaguars, had a season-best 144 yards rushing despite missing most of third quarter with leg cramps in a 27-17 win over the Titans.

■ Deuce McAllister, Saints, rushed for 127 yards and a touchdown on 16 carries against Kansas City.

■ Curtis Martin, Jets, scored twice in the first half and finished 19-for-32 for 128 yards and 28 carries against Baltimore.

■ Tim Barber, Giants, had 108 yards on 21 carries, but only 28 yards in the second half in a 17-14 loss to Arizona.

AP photos

SPORTS



Despite O'Neal's dismal performance at line, Heat put away Bucks in 2OT, Page 26



Green Bay Packers' Robert Ferguson (89) looks at the ball after fumbling in the final minutes of their game against the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday in Green Bay, Wis. Ferguson returned the kickoff to midfield, where Antoine Winfield forced a fumble. The officials ruled that Packers tight end Ben Steele, front left, recovered, even though Minnesota's Larry Ned emerged with the ball. The Packers went on to win 34-31.

Packers make key pickup

Fumble recovery by Vikings castoff sets up winning FG

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Ben Steele repaid both the team that believed in him and the one that gave up on him.

The tight end, snatched up by the Green Bay when he was cut by Minnesota in training camp, recovered a fumble that led to Ryan Longwell's 33-yard field goal as time expired, giving the Packers a 34-31 victory Sunday over their bitter rival.

"We stole Steele from them, and he stole the ball from them," Packers guard Marco Rivera said.

Minnesota's Derek Ross certainly felt robbed.

He pounced on the ball when Green Bay's Robert Ferguson fumbled on a kickoff return at midfield with 1:20 left after the Vikings had scored two touchdowns in a 93-second span to tie it. But Steele, who outweighs Ross by more than 50 pounds, fought his

way into the scrum and clutched the ball, too.

The officials eventually ruled Green Bay had possession, and Brett Favre led the Packers on the winning drive for their fourth straight victory. The Vikings lost their third straight game and fell into a tie with the Packers atop the NFC North at 5-4.

"There wasn't any doubt in my mind I had the ball," Steele said. "I wasn't going to give it up until the ref said, '[No.] 82, you've got it.' There was a lot of scratching and clawing. It seemed like an eternity, but there was no way I was going to let go of that sucker."

Ross said he was robbed by referee Ron Winter, plain and simple.

"Clearly, I had the ball. Yeah, we had the ball," Ross said. "I don't think the referee did a good job of getting everybody off the pile to see clearly I had the ball."

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Packers quarterback Brett Favre celebrates after a 17-yard touchdown pass to Bubba Franks in the second quarter Sunday.

More coverage inside:



■ Rookie Roethlisberger wins seventh straight as Steelers (8-1) show no signs of slowing down against rival Browns, Page 29

■ Ravens ride momentum after Reed's second-quarter interception in end zone to victory over Jets, Page 30

■ WR Brown becomes first Patriot to record reception, interception in same game in victory over Bledsoe, Bills, Page 31

■ Scoreboard, Page 28



BCS computers continue to give Oklahoma slim lead over Auburn for No. 2 ranking

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Johnson's victory at Darlington sets up grand finale for Nextel Cup

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Eskandarian scores twice as United win fourth MLS Cup

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S. Williams, Sharapova meet in WTA Tour Championship final Page 24